

## ***Food Chains and Webs --- "What's for dinner?"***

Every organism needs to **obtain energy** in order to live. For example, **plants get energy from the sun**, some animals eat plants, and some animals eat other animals.

A **food chain** is the sequence of **who eats whom** in a biological community (an ecosystem) to obtain nutrition. A food chain starts with the **primary energy source**, usually the **sun** or boiling-hot deep sea vents. The next link in the chain is an **organism that makes its own food** from the primary energy source -- an example is **photosynthetic plants** that make their own food from sunlight (using a process called **photosynthesis**) and **chemosynthetic bacteria** that make their food energy from chemicals in hydrothermal vents. These are called **autotrophs** or **primary producers**.

### **Sample Food Chains**

Trophic Level	Grassland Biome	Pond Biome	Ocean Biome
Primary Producer	grass ↓	algae ↓	phytoplankton ↓
Primary Consumer	grasshopper ↓	mosquito larva ↓	zooplankton ↓
Secondary Consumer	rat ↓	dragonfly larva ↓	fish ↓
Tertiary Consumer	snake ↓	fish ↓	seal ↓
Quaternary Consumer	hawk ↓	raccoon ↓	white shark ↓

Next come organisms that eat the autotrophs; these organisms are called **herbivores** or **primary consumers** -- an example is a rabbit that eats grass. The next link in the chain is animals that eat herbivore - these are called **secondary consumers** -- an example is a snake that eats rabbits. In turn, these animals are

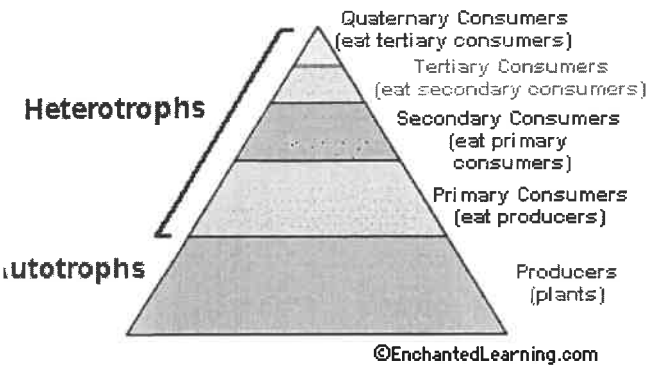
eaten by larger **predators** -- an example is an owl that eats snakes. The **tertiary consumers** are eaten by **quaternary consumers** -- an example is a hawk that eats owls. Each food chain ends with a **top predator** and animal with **no natural enemies** (like an alligator, hawk, or polar bear).

### Food Chain Questions

1. What travels through a food chain or web?
2. What is the ultimate energy for all life on Earth?
3. Food chains start with what?
4. The 1<sup>st</sup> organism in a food chain must always be what type of organism?
5. Name 2 food making processes.
6. Where do chemosynthetic bacteria get their energy?
7. Define herbivore.
8. Herbivores are also called \_\_\_\_\_.
9. What are animals called that feed on herbivores?
10. Secondary consumers are eaten by larger \_\_\_\_\_.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ consumers eat secondary consumers.
12. Make a food chain with a producer and 3 consumers.

# The Food Web

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_



The arrows in a food chain show the flow of **energy**, from the sun or hydrothermal vent to a top predator. As the energy flows from organism to organism, energy is lost at each step. A network of many food chains is called a **food web**.

## Trophic Levels:

The trophic level of an organism is the position it holds in a food chain.

1. **Primary producers** (organisms that make their own food from sunlight and/or chemical energy from deep sea vents) are the base of every food chain - these organisms are called **autotrophs**.
2. **Primary consumers** are animals that eat primary producers; they are also called **herbivores** (plant-eaters).
3. **Secondary consumers** eat primary consumers. They are **carnivores** (meat-eaters) and **omnivores** (animals that eat both animals and plants).
4. **Tertiary consumers** eat secondary consumers.
5. **Quaternary consumers** eat tertiary consumers.
6. Food chains "end" with top predators, animals that have little or no natural enemies.

When any organism dies, it is eventually eaten by **detrivores** (like vultures, worms and crabs) and broken down by **decomposers** (mostly bacteria and fungi), and the exchange of energy continues.

Some organisms' position in the food chain can **vary as their diet differs**. For example, when a bear eats berries, the bear is functioning as a **primary consumer**. When a bear eats a plant-eating rodent, the bear is functioning as a **secondary consumer**. When the bear eats salmon, the bear is functioning as a **tertiary consumer** (this is because salmon is a secondary consumer, since salmon eat herring that eat zooplankton that eat phytoplankton, that make their own energy from sunlight). Think about how **people's place in the food chain varies - often within a single meal!**

## Food Web Questions

1. What is used to indicate the flow of energy in a food chain or web?
2. What happens to energy as we move from step to step in a chain or web?
3. Define food web.
4. What is meant by trophic levels?
5. Define autotroph.
6. The 1<sup>st</sup> trophic level consists of \_\_\_\_\_ producer called \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Name the 2<sup>nd</sup> trophic level (both names).
8. Secondary consumers may be \_\_\_\_\_ eating meat or \_\_\_\_\_ that eat both plants and animals.
9. What is the 3<sup>rd</sup> trophic level called?
10. What is the 4<sup>th</sup> trophic level called?
11. At the 5<sup>th</sup> trophic level would be \_\_\_\_\_ consumers that eat \_\_\_\_\_ consumers.
12. Give an example of 3 detritivores. On what do they feed?
13. What organism feeds on dead plants and animals and helps recycle them?
14. Both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ act as decomposers

**Match each Food Chain Word to its Definition.**

**Draw a line from each word on the left to its definition.**

food chain	The network of all the inter-related food chains in a biological community.
food web	The sequence of who eats whom in a biological community.
autotroph	An organism that gets its energy by eating other organisms.
heterotroph	An organism that makes its food from light or chemical energy without eating.
carnivore	An organism that eats plants.
herbivore	An organism that eats meat.
primary consumer	A meat-eater that eats primary consumers.
secondary consumer	A meat-eater that eats tertiary consumers.
tertiary consumer	A meat-eater that eats autotrophs.
quaternary consumer	A meat-eater that eats secondary consumers.