**Vocabulary:** **Dichotomous Keys**

dictionary2

**Vocabulary**

* Dichotomous key – a series of question or statement sets that is used to identify *organisms* or objects.
  + Dichotomous keys are used during field or lab investigations to identify unfamiliar organisms.
* Genus – a classification subdivision of a family of organisms.
  + Biologists classify organism into several different groups. The largest group is a domain. Domains are subdivided into kingdoms, which are further subdivided into phyla, classes, orders, families, genera, and, finally, *species*.
* Organism – a living thing.
  + Individual bacteria, fungi, plants, and animals are all examples of organisms.
* Scientific name – a name used by scientists that consists of an organism’s genus and species.
  + For example, the name *Ranunculus aquatilis* is made up of the genus name “Ranunculus” and the species name “aquatilis.”
  + Scientific names are traditionally italicized. The genus name is capitalized, while the species name is kept lowercase.
* Species – a group of organisms sharing similar *traits* that are capable of breeding fertile offspring.
* Trait – a distinguishing characteristic or quality.
  + Traits can be physical, such as hair color or height. Traits can also be behavioral, such as the tendency to hibernate or migrate.