

Ecosystems

Class notes: food chains and energy flow

Living things and their surroundings

An ecosystem includes living organisms and the nonliving parts of their environment, such as water, soil, and sunlight. Organisms interact with each other and with these surroundings.

Producers and consumers

Plants are producers. They use sunlight to make sugars through photosynthesis. Animals are consumers: they get energy by eating plants or other animals.

Follow the energy

A food chain shows one feeding pathway. A food web connects several food chains. Arrows point from the organism being eaten to the organism that eats it.

Grass > Grasshopper > Frog > Snake > Hawk

Decomposers recycle nutrients

Fungi and many bacteria break down dead organisms and waste. This returns nutrients to the environment, where plants can use them again.