

Connecting With Your Child

Making a Food Web Poster or Brochure

To help your child learn more about food webs, create a poster or brochure advertising a local food web. Begin with a brainstorming session to think about the organisms that live in your area. Use a variety of resources to research the organisms and how they get their food energy. An excellent way to gather information is to search the web for your local or state government's Fish and Wildlife Service.

When you have selected a local food web, classify the organisms using the following categories:

- **Producers:** any organism that uses the Sun's energy to produce its own food. Examples include trees, bushes, cacti, grasses, vines, algae, and phytoplankton (which are plant-like organisms that live in fresh and salt water). Point out to your child that algae and other phytoplankton are common producers from aquatic (water) food webs.
- **Consumers:** any organism that has to consume another organism to get energy. Some examples are deer, beavers, geese, butterflies, mountain lions, falcons, frogs, badgers, coyotes, raccoons, armadillos, and sea turtles.
- **Decomposers:** a consumer that eats dead material. Fungi are very common decomposers, as are bacteria. Some flies, worms, and mites are also decomposers.

Print out or draw pictures of several of your organisms and label each one with its common name and its category (e.g., raccoon – consumer/omnivore). Arrange the organisms on the poster or brochure in a food web, and be sure to include the Sun as the source of energy for producers. Producers should be shown passing energy on to consumers. Try to include as many connections between the organisms as possible.

Here are some questions to discuss with your child:

- Are there some organisms that are linked to more than one organism? Why?
- Why are decomposers such important members of a food web?
- What would happen if one organism completely disappeared from the food web?