Cells as the basic units of life



Cells are living things

All living things have the following life processes:

- 1. **Feeding** living things need food. Green plants make their own food during photosynthesis. Animals get their food by eating other organisms.
- 2. **Respiration** process of gaseous exchange.
- 3. **Excretion** living things produce waste products (such as carbon dioxide) which they need to get rid of.
- 4. **Growth** living things grow and get bigger.
- 5. **Movement** animals tend to move quite fast so we see this happening. Plants move very slow.
- 6. **Reproduction** living things produce new individuals that are the same to themselves.
- 7. **Sensitivity** living things react to the environment.

Cell structure

- The cell is the basic structural and functional unit of all living organisms. Cells can be seen under a microscope (they are microscopic).
- Plant and animal cells have a cell membrane, cytoplasm, nucleus, and organelles such as mitochondria, vacuoles and chloroplasts.
- The cell membrane encloses the contents of the cell. It allows specific substances to pass into and out of the cell
- The cytoplasm is the jelly-like medium in which many chemical reactions take place.
- The *nucleus* contains DNA.
- The nucleus is enclosed by a nuclear membrane (in plants and animals).
- DNA contains inherited characteristics, such as whether eyes are blue or brown.
- DNA is unique to each person; this variation accounts for differences within species.
- Mitochondria are responsible for respiration to release energy from food

Microscope



The (compound) light microscope

Animal cell



Generalised structure of an animal cell]

Plant cell



Generalised structure of plant cell

Difference between plant and animal cell



Summary

Plant cells differ from animal cells.

- Plant and animal cells are enclosed by a cell membrane, and plant cells also have rigid cellulose *cell walls* to provide support for the plant.
- Plant cells also contain organelles such as large vacuoles and chloroplasts. *Chloroplasts* contain chlorophyll to absorb light energy for photosynthesis.
- Vacuoles in plant cells have several functions including support and storage (Vacuoles in animal cells are small and temporary or absent).

Summary

Characteristics	Plant cell	Animal cell
Cell shape	Rigid and fixed shape due to the presence of a cell wall.	Flexible or changeable shape due to the absence of cell wall.
Cell wall	Sturdy cell wall present.	No cell wall.
Vacuole	Has one or two large permanent vacuoles.	Usually no vacuole or many small one.
Chloroplast	Found in cytoplasm of certain cells (green leaves)	No chloroplast.

Cells in tissues, organs and systems

- Cells come in many different shapes and sizes.
- Cells are adapted to perform specific functions, such as muscle cells which are specialised to contract and enable movement.
- Microscopic organisms such as bacteria, consist of a single cell. Macroscopic organisms such as humans, consist of large numbers of cells.
- A group of cells performing a specific function form a tissue.
- A group of tissues make up an organ, and organs working together in groups form systems, systems make up an organism.
- Stem cells are cells that have the ability to divide and develop into many different cell types.

Level of organisation

Level of Organization	Explanation	Example
Cellular Level	Cells are the smallest unit of life. Cells are enclosed by a membrane or cell wall and in multicellular organisms often perform specific functions.	Muscle cell, Skin cell, Neuron
Tissue Level	Tissues are groups of cells with similar functions	Muscle, Epithelial, Connective
Organ Level	Organs are two or more types of tissues that work together to complete a specific task.	Heart, Liver, Stomach
Organ System Level	An organ system is group of organs that carries out more generalized set of functions.	Digestive System, Circulatory System
Organismal Level	An organism has several organ systems that function together.	Human