

Name: _____

The Food Chain

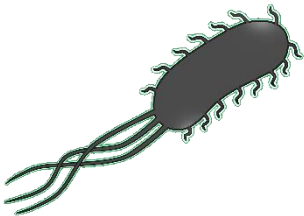
The food chain, also called the trophic chain, is the transfer of nutrients from one predator to another; that is to say, it is the chain of who eats whom in an ecosystem.

Food chain in an African meadow

For example, plants produce nutrients that pass into insects that consume it. Then, those nutrients pass to the birds that eat insects. Next, they are passed on to the small mammals that eat the birds. These small mammals, in turn, become the food of the large predators, such as wild dogs, hyenas, and lions. When these big predators die, they become the food of the birds that eat carrion.



The end of every food chain



Finally, every living being ends up in the jaws of bacteria that break down the bodies that have died so that some of their nutrients will be used as food for plants again. If some species of the chain were to disappear, those that ate that part of the food chain would also disappear. Also, the link in the food chain that is no longer being eaten would grow in numbers, damaging the balance of the ecosystem.

Answer the following Questions:

1. What is the other name for the food chain?

2. Which species begins the food chain in the example above?

3. Who is the last predator of the food chain?

4. Where do some of the nutrients go at the end of the food chain?

5. Explain what would happen if some species in the chain disappears.
