

# Vocabulary



**decomposer** an organism that feeds on dead organisms  
Molds, bacteria, and snails are decomposers in aquatic ecosystems. They break down the dead organisms and release nutrients into the ecosystem for use by plants.

**food chain** the path of food energy from one organism to another in an ecosystem  
Producers such as plants are the first living link in a food chain. They produce their own food using energy from the sun. When an insect eats a plant and then a frog eats the insect, energy is passed along the food chain.

**food web** overlapping food chains with different paths for the flow of energy in an ecosystem  
Each animal in an ecosystem eats many different things. A guppy, for example, eats daphnia and worms. A bigger fish might eat guppies and insects. A food web shows how these food chains overlap.

**fossil** the remains or traces of an organism that lived long ago  
A fossil might be a bone from an ancient animal or a set of its footprints. Fossils help scientists figure out what ancient organisms looked like and how they lived.

**predator** an animal that hunts, catches, and eats other live animals  
Guppies are predators when they eat daphnia.

**prey** an animal that is hunted, caught, and eaten by other animals  
Daphnia are prey when they are eaten by guppies. Baby guppies are prey when they are eaten by adult guppies.

**producer** an organism that makes its own food  
Plants and algae are producers. They use the energy in sunlight to make food from carbon dioxide and water.