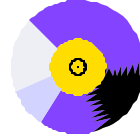
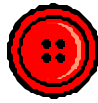


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## Learning to Use a Classification Key

**Concept:** Classifying objects according to properties

**National Science Standards:**

A	B	C	D	E	F	G

A. **Background:** The word “classify” means to arrange or group objects into sets or subsets. We can

classify things according to properties such as size, shape, color, texture, temperature, hardness, or any other properties. Classification methods are important to scientists for organizing large amounts of information.

II. **Objective:** Students will be able to arrange objects into sets or subsets based on properties such as

shape, size, and color. They will learn about sorting, grouping, recognizing similarities and differences, organizing, and following a flow chart.

III. **Suggested grade levels:** 2-6

**Estimated time:**

- Teacher prep: 15 minutes
- Activity: one or two 40-minute class periods, depending on extensions

**Materials needed:**

- buttons
- overhead projector
- Ziploc™ bags
- classification key

**Safety/Disposal:** Instruct students not to place buttons in their mouths.

**Procedure:**

1. Brainstorm with the class ways to classify buttons.

2.                   2. Distribute buttons to students. Have the students decide on the physical properties to use to classify the buttons. (See page 5 for an example of a classification key.)
3.       “Key out” each button until each button stands alone at the end of the key.

**Wrap-up:**

- Expected result: Students will be able to read a classification key.
- Exchange classification keys.
  - Follow-up questions: Discuss the classification key. Discuss how the project could be used with other topics.
- Discuss any frustrations with creating the classification key.

**Extensions:**

- Classify leaves and trees, animals, plants, rocks and minerals, etc.

**Resources/Bibliography:** Oriental Trading Comp.  
 P.O. Box 3407  
 Omaha, NE 68103-0407 (*This company sells buttons in bulk. Buttons may also be found in a craft store.*)

Young Naturalist Company  
 1900 N. Main  
 Newton, Kansas 67114 (*leaf extension project*)

Spring 1997 Spectrum - Journal of the Illinois Science Teachers Association. Article by Daniel Heuser entitled "Toys In The Classroom: Developing Classification Skills Through Object Exploration."  
 Spectrum is available from:  
 Diana Dummitt, ISTA Executive Secretary  
 University of Illinois  
 College of Education  
 1310 So. Sixth St  
 Champaign, IL 61820  
 E-mail: [ddummitt@uiuc.edu](mailto:ddummitt@uiuc.edu)  
 Phone: (217)244-0173 Fax: (217)244-5437

River Ecosystem Unit Home Page. Ed: Tyna Heise. SUNY. 7 July 1998  
 <<http://www.potsdam.edu/EDUC/GLC/tm/lesson1.html>>  
 (*This resource contains a class activity which includes an interesting use of Shel Silverstein's poem, "Shapes."*)

Lesson Plan #4: Plants. SUNY. 7 July 1998 <<http://www.potsdam.edu/EDUC/GLC/river/bio/blesson/lesfiv>> (*extension*)