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# Animal, Vegetable or Mineral?

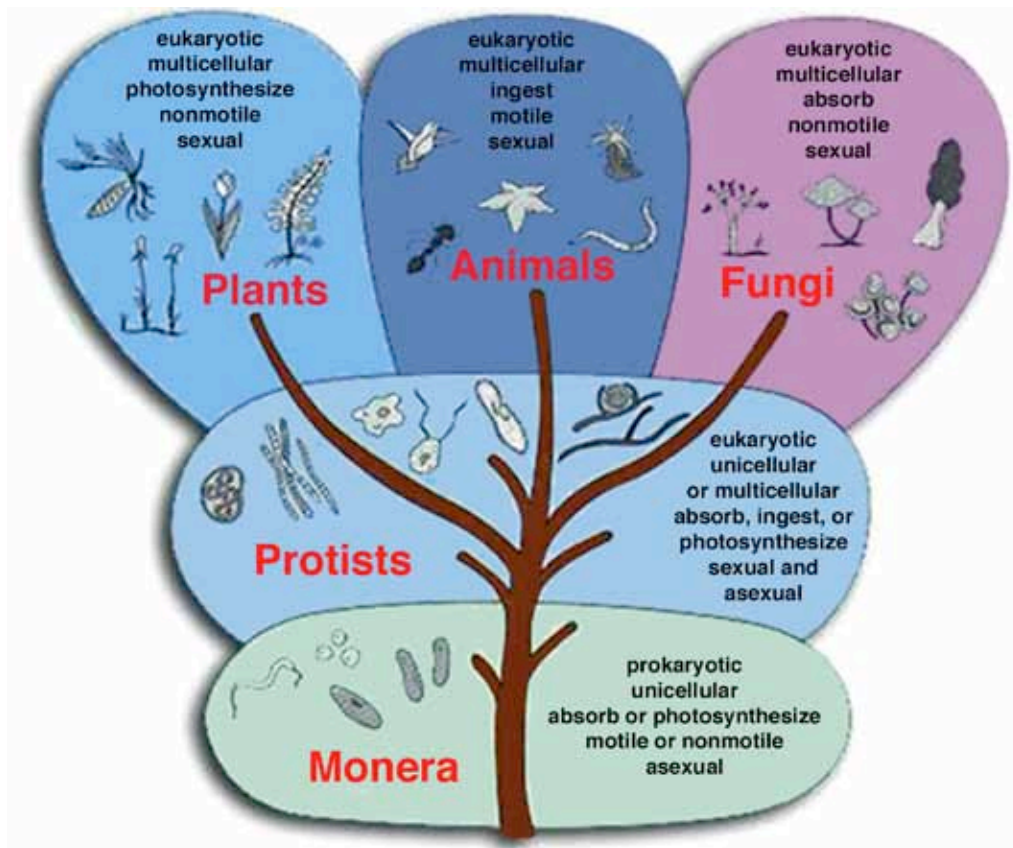
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## A BEGINNING LESSON IN TAXONOMY

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Remember an old guessing game? I hold out my clenched hand and ask you what am I holding? It's getting more complicated.

In olden days a living thing was either animal or vegetable, but now taxonomists have added some more Kingdoms, their divisions of all living things. The animals are Kingdom *Animalia* and the vegetables are Kingdom *Plantae*. We might have



agreed to put mushrooms in with the plants; however, taxonomists have a separate Kingdom *Fungi* for 'em.



Taxonomists have now decided that these three kingdoms are an outgrowth of a couple more basic earlier and still present kingdoms! There's Kingdom *Protoctista*, a catchall for multicellular organisms that don't fit in animal, plant or fungus kingdoms. And there is an earlier kingdom giving rise to all the above, Kingdom *Prokaryotae*. These singular organisms include bacteria, those with no nucleus or subcellular organellas.

Thus this living grouping has no less than five Kingdoms.

So the object in your clenched fist may not be an old mineral, an animal or a vegetable or even a fungus but a *protoctista* or even a *prokaryotae* that you can't even see!

Perhaps washing your hands before holding out your fist might eliminate some of those little buggers. Otherwise a smart guesser might give you a hard time about what's really in your fist.

And we have all these here in the desert! The rocks are for sure, the plants and animals, true, but the little buggers are with us too.

I suppose I could talk a little more about the options, but enough is enough.

The guessing game is more complicated but still fun. Just wash your hands before trying the game on one of your kids; they may know all of this stuff about living things here in the desert.

