A Dichotomous Key Activity for Seashells

Instructions: Using the images on the card set that your teacher gives you, you should be able to correctly place a shell in its correct position on the dichotomous key. Once you have correctly identified where the shell goes in the key, write the number of each shell (noted on the card) on the line provided.

I. Univalve 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16
   A. Outer Projections (spikes) 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10
      1. Spikes at two ends 8, 10
         a) Shell solid white in color 8
         b) Shell not solid white 10
      2. Spikes at one end only 3, 4, 7
         a) Shell is longer than it is wide 3, 4
            (1) Shell has vertical stripes 4
            (2) Shell has no vertical stripes 3
         b) Shell is wider than it is long 7
   B. Spikes not present 2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 14, 16
      1. Shell is wider than longer 2, 16
         a) Shell has speckles 16
         b) Shell has no speckles 2
      2. Shell is longer than wider 5, 6, 9, 11, 14
         a) Shell is speckled 6, 11
            (1) Shell is approximately 7 cm from umbo to base 6
            (2) Shell is approximately 5 cm from umbo to base 11
         b) Shell is not speckled 5, 9, 14
            (1) Shell is striped 5
            (2) Shell has no stripes 9, 14
               (a) Curved at pointed end 14
               (b) No curve at pointed end 9

II. Bivalve 1, 12, 13, 15, 17
   A. Two shells present (articulated) 12, 15
      1. Umbo axial length is approximately 5.0 cm long 12
      2. Umbo axial length is less than 5.0 cm long 15
   B. One shell present 1, 17, 13
      1. Shell has pointed umbo area 1, 13
         a) Shell is smooth 13
         b) Shell is rough 1
      2. Shell has straight umbo area 17
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Answer Key

Sea Shells

Univalve 2, 11, 14, 16

Spikes not present 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16

Spikes at one end only 3, 4, 7

Shell is longer than it is wide 3, 4

Shell has vertical stripes 4

Shell has no vertical stripes 3

Shell is wider than it is long 2, 16

Shell is speckles 16

Shell is not speckles 2

Shell is approximately 5 cm from umbo to base 6

Shell is approximately 5 cm from umbo to base 11

Shell is striped 5

Shell is not striped 9, 14

Curved at pointed end 14

No curve at pointed end 9

Shell has pointed umbo area 20

Shell has straight umbo area 1

One shell present 1, 20

Two shells present (articulated) 14, 15, 17

Umbo axial length is greater than 5 cm long 16

Umbo axial length is less than 5 cm long 14

Shell has pointed umbo area 20

Shell has smooth umbo area 1

Shell is smooth 17

Shell is rough 15

Shell is not speckles 5, 9, 14

Shell is not speckles 5, 9, 14

Shell is spckles 16

Shell is not spckles 2

Shell solid white in color 8

Shell not solid white 10

Spike at two ends 8, 10

Outer projections (spikes) 5, 8, 10

Sea Shells