

Safety First!

Using live organisms in the classroom truly excites and engages students of all ages. To ensure your students have a successful and safe experience with these specimens, please review the following questions and safety guidelines.

What are your local guidelines?

Your principal, school district, and state department of education may have policies that prohibit or recommend certain organisms or procedures for the use in classrooms. It is the teacher's responsibility to know the specific guidelines applicable to their situation.

Are there applicable permit requirements?

It is easy to comply with permit requirements once you are informed. Most permits simply prohibit the release of organisms, because they could have an adverse effect on your local environment. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), and/or state/provincial agriculture departments may regulate the acquisition and use of certain organisms. Make sure that you know which permits apply to you by consulting your state's/province's and/or country's department of agriculture. Some states/provinces may require the teacher or school to obtain an end-user permit from their respective agriculture department before live specimens can be shipped to their school. In some cases where the USDA or CFIA considers a specimen to be a potential pest, we may possess a permit that allows us to transport these specimens to some or all states. Click [here](#) to view background information and permits for our US customers. Click [here](#) to view background information and permits for our Canadian customers. As a condition for transporting these organisms, we are required to notify the end-user of specific USDA and CFIA requirements. You can refer to species-specific Care Sheets for additional requirements. If you need more information or recent requirements, we will inform you of the most current regulatory requirements at time of your order.

Can you and your students manage potential hazards associated with the organism?

The care sheets included on this website list the primary hazards associated with the organism. It is your decision as an educator to determine if the educational benefits outweigh the potential risks for your students. It is also the teacher's responsibility to make sure students are aware of hazards, are properly equipped to prevent hazards, and are trained to deal with hazards if they do arise.

Can you and your students humanely care for the organism?

Our care sheets list the minimum requirements for classroom care of an organism. Requirements for optimal long-term care or breeding/culturing are not addressed in the care sheets. Take time to prepare for properly housing and feeding the organism, as well as train students in humane care.

What will you do with your organism at the end of classroom use?

A teacher should never purchase a specimen without a plan for safe and humane disposition. It is up to the teacher to know their school policy with respect to disposition. Our care sheets also provide some suggestions and options.

Other considerations in choosing an organism:

Most teaching activities can be done with more than one type of organism that can be obtained in more than one way. We suggest that you chose specimens that are not endangered. If you obtain your specimen from a reputable source, this is unlikely to be an issue. We also recommend using laboratory-bred specimens rather than collected specimens whenever possible to minimize environmental impact and to assure availability that suits your schedule.

