



THE BIG IDEA

A **category** is two or more things that belong together because they are alike in some way — and **sorting** things into categories is the very first tool of every scientist.

A jumbled pile hides everything inside it. But the grocery store keeps apples with apples and milk with milk, the library shelves each book with its family, and your shirt drawer holds only shirts — so anything can be found in a moment. The whole grown-up world is already sorted; today you learn to see it.

MANY RIGHT WAYS

The same pile can be sorted by **color**, by **size**, by **what it's made of**, or by **what it's used for**. The things never change — only the **attribute** you notice. Every way that suits your purpose is right.

And groups hold groups: fruits live inside *fresh produce*, and produce lives inside *food*. A group inside a group is a **subcategory**.

WATCH FOR THIS IN EVERYDAY LIFE

- At the grocery store, look up and down the aisle — “how did the store sort all of this?”
- Open the silverware drawer — “what attribute is this drawer sorted by?”
- Find one thing at home that could be sorted a **second** way — “what else could these be sorted by?”
- At bedtime, remember the day in categories — fun things, food things, learning things — “does the finger trick work on a whole day?”

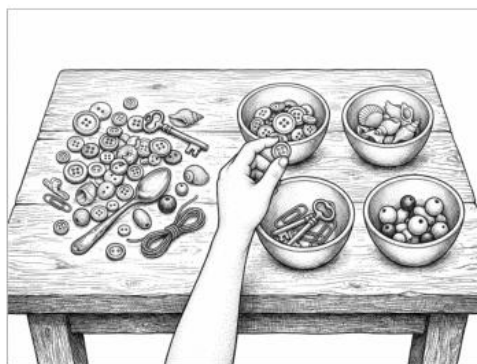


Fig. 1 — sorting: the same jumble, one bowl per category — buttons with buttons, shells with shells.

WORDS TO KNOW

sort

group

category

organize

attribute

subcategory

sort — putting things into groups · *group* — things put together in one place · *category* — things that belong together · *organize* — putting everything in its place · *attribute* — the thing you notice: color, size, or use · *subcategory* — a group inside a group