

## Using Dichotomous Keys

### Student Worksheet

Name:  
Class:  
Date:

#### Aim

To use a tabular dichotomous key to identify different dragon species.

#### Background Information

Dichotomous keys are used to identify specimens found in the field. They give you a series of choices that describe what the specimen looks like and narrows down what it could be.

These choices focus on structural features, such as the number of legs or body segments, or the presence of fur, scales, feathers or antennae. Keys avoid using features that could differ between individuals in a species, such as colour or size, or features that are difficult to observe, such as behaviour.

The key will provide the scientific name of a species. This includes its genus name (the first word, which is capitalised) and the species name (the second word). The scientific name is always *italicised*.

#### Pre-Practical Questions

- 1) What is a dichotomous key used for?

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- 2) Outline how to read a tabular dichotomous key, such as the one on page 3.

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3) Dichotomous keys tend to ask about structural traits, like how many legs an organism has or if it has scales, feathers or fur.

Why do these keys avoid asking about other traits, like colour, size or behaviour?

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### How to Read a Tabular Dichotomous Key

Start with choice number one. Pick the option that describes your organism.

Next to the option you picked, there will be an instruction.

If it tells you to go to another choice, follow it (e.g: go to 5).

If it gives you a species name (in *italics*), then congratulations, you have identified your organism!

### Identifying Dragons

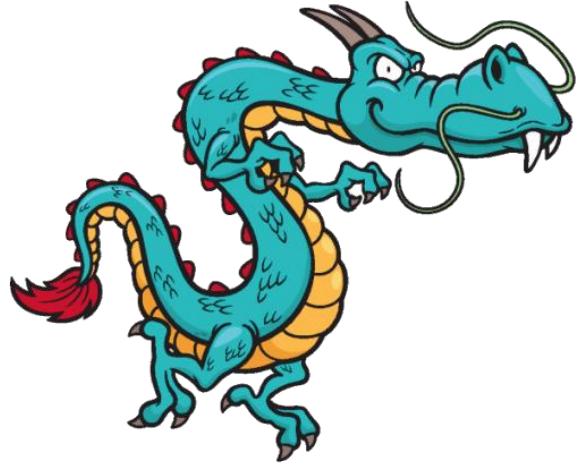
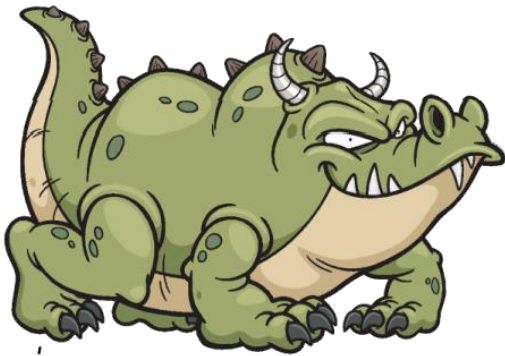
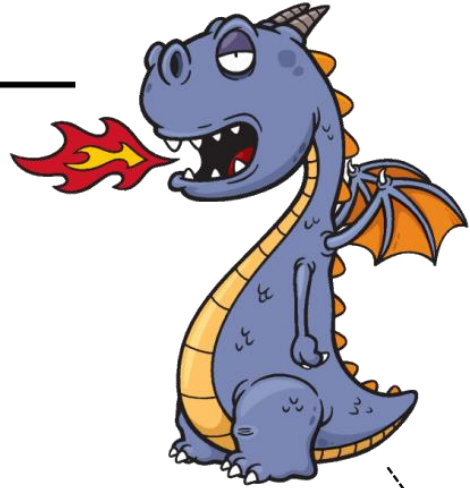
Use the tabular dichotomous key below to identify the dragons on page 4. Write the species name for each dragon on the lines provided.

One of them (*Barbatum coluber*) has already been identified for you.

1.	Has wings	<b>go to 2</b>
	No wings	<b>go to 5</b>
2.	Has horns	<b>go to 3</b>
	No horns	<b><i>Ignis rostrum</i></b>
3.	Two fingers	<b><i>Ignis caeruleus</i></b>
	More than two fingers	<b>go to 4</b>
4.	Tip of tail shaped like a spade	<b><i>Immanis dentium</i></b>
	No tail spade	<b><i>Immanis ursus</i></b>
5.	Has whiskers	<b><i>Barbatum coluber</i></b>
	No whiskers	<b>go to 6</b>
6.	Has horns	<b><i>Cornifer crocodilus</i></b>
	No horns	<b><i>Calvus stilio</i></b>



Barbatum coluber



## Discussion Questions

1) Which species had wings?

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2) Which species did not have horns?

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3) What were all of the **genus** names you found?

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4) Which genera (plural of genus) contained more than one species? Name these species.

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### Extra for Experts

In this lesson, you identified a lot of different dragon species. Their genus and species names might look like gibberish, but they are actually in Latin! Each Latin name describes the dragon that holds it.

Using language books or websites, try to translate these names into English to see what we have called our dragons. The complete the table below:

Latin name	English name
<i>Ignis rostrum</i>	
<i>Ignis caeruleus</i>	
<i>Immanis dentium</i>	
<i>Immanis ursus</i>	
<i>Barbatum coluber</i>	
<i>Cornifer crocodilus</i>	
<i>Calvus stilio</i>	