

The cell

Our planet is home to different types of living organisms, including plants, animals, fungi, algae and bacteria. All living organisms consist of tiny units called cells.

Living organisms can be unicellular or multicellular.

- In a unicellular organism, the cell performs all of the life processes.
- In a multicellular organism, different cells perform different functions.



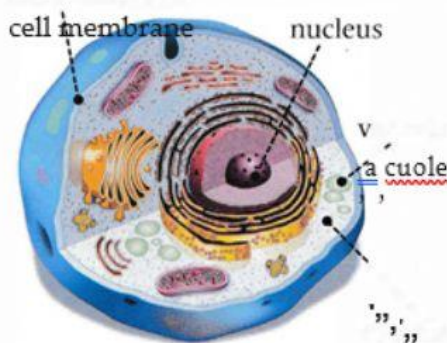
Closterium, a unicellular green alga

Animal and plant cells have some structures in common:

Animal cell structure

Animal cells have:

- A nucleus. It controls the activities of the cell, such as reproduction.
- a cell membrane. It controls the substances that enter and leave the cell.
- Cytoplasm. It is a jelly-like substance between the cell membrane and the nucleus. It contains various organelles and proteins.
- Mitochondria. They are small. They contain enzymes and proteins which the organism needs to survive. Not all animal cells have one.



Plant cell structure

Plant cells have a cell wall, a large central vacuole, and chloroplasts as well, but they also have:

- a cell membrane. It gives the cell its shape and protection.
- Chloroplasts. They contain chlorophyll so the plant can carry out the process of photosynthesis.

