

# NHMU: Classified Information

## Summary

In this activity students learn to classify objects based on their attributes.

## Time Frame

1 class periods of 30 minutes each

## Group Size

Small Groups

## Materials

A "Doohickey Kit" for each group of students  
(Kits should contain familiar objects such as rocks, string, paper clips, cloth, bottle caps, etc.  
Each kit must be identical ).

## Background for Teachers

A basic element of thinking is classification. We place objects and situations into conceptual categories in order to make sense of the world. By doing this we eliminate the need to respond to every object and situation as a completely new experience.

We classify objects by choosing certain attributes to concentrate on while ignoring others. We cannot take in all attributes at once so we select just a few as being relevant to the task at hand.

Classification of data is an important part of all scientific study, including archaeology.

## Instructional Procedures

Divide students into groups of 4 or 5 and give each group a "Doohickey Kit". Have each group organize the objects into categories using one or more classification schemes.

When everyone is finished ask each group to explain its scheme. Which attributes did they use to place objects in certain categories. (shape, color, function, type of material, etc.). Compare and contrast how groups chose to classify objects.

Explore with students that one classification system is not better than another. The utility of each classification system depends on what the classifier wants to know. When archaeologists bring artifacts back to the laboratory, they decide what they want to know and use classification accordingly.

Devise some simple questions that might be answered by classifying the objects in the "Doohickey Kit". For example: What colors are present? How many shapes are there (name them)? How might these objects be used? The students will need to regroup the objects based on the questions asked.

## Bibliography

*Intrigue of the Past Activity Guide*  
; 1992.

This lesson plan was provided by the [Utah Museum of Natural History](http://www.nhmuseum.org).

## Authors

[Utah LessonPlans](http://www.nhmuseum.org)