

Who eats what in the river?

Read the information in the table below

ANIMAL	What does it eat?
Mayfly nymph	Algae and decaying plant debris.
Stonefly nymph	Algae and decaying plant debris.
Caddis larva	Algae and small larvae of other invertebrates (minibeasts).
Freshwater shrimp	Dead plants and animals.
Water louse	Algae and decaying plant debris.
Blood worm	Dead and decaying plant material at the bottom of the river.
Water snail	Water plants and algae.
Minnow	Freshwater shrimps, insect larvae, algae and plant material.
Trout	All kind of water invertebrates (minibeasts) and smaller fish. Also adult mayfly.
Otter	Fish, amphibians (frogs, newts)

Using the information in the table, we can draw food chains or webs for a river showing who eats who:

Algae → Mayfly nymph → Caddis larva

Now try drawing your own food chains or more complicated food webs. Remember, the arrow always points to the animal that is doing the eating. Think of the arrow as meaning 'is eaten by'.

Who eats what in the river?

Try and answer the following questions:

Look at your food chains– what do they all start with?

Look at your food chains or food webs– how important do you think freshwater invertebrates (minibeasts) are in a river or stream? Why do you think this?

As you have already learnt, some freshwater invertebrates are very sensitive to pollution and cannot live in a river if pollution is present. What would happen to the other animals in the food chain if these invertebrates were missing from the river?

Think of some other animals or birds you could add to your food web.