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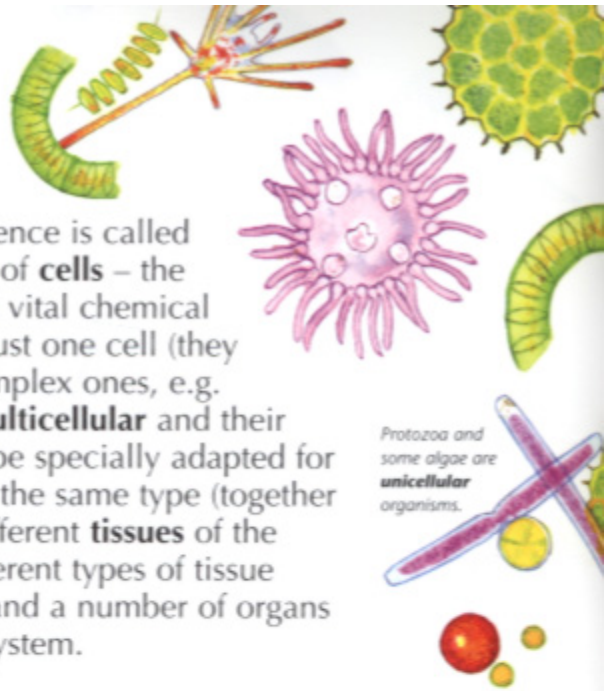


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THE STRUCTURE OF LIVING THINGS



Protozoa and some algae are unicellular organisms.

A living thing capable of a separate existence is called an **organism**. All organisms are made up of **cells** – the basic units of life, which carry out all the vital chemical processes. The simplest organisms have just one cell (they are **unicellular** or **acellular**), but very complex ones, e.g. humans, have many billions. They are **multicellular** and their cells are of many different types, each type specially adapted for its own particular job. Groups of cells of the same type (together with non-living material) make up the different **tissues** of the organism, e.g. muscle tissue. Several different types of tissue together form an **organ**, e.g. a stomach, and a number of organs together form a **system**, e.g. a digestive system.

The parts of a cell

All cells are made up of the same basic parts: the **cell membrane**, **cytoplasm** and **nucleus**. Each of these parts has a specific role to play.

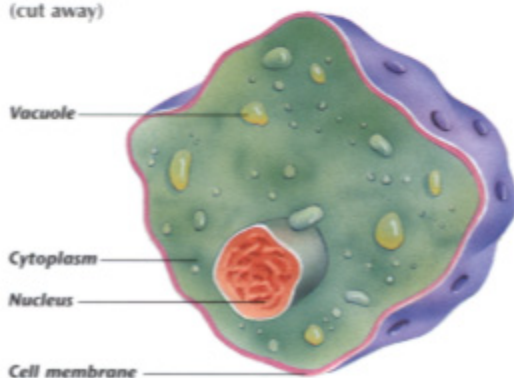
Cell membrane

Also called the **plasma membrane** or **plasmalemma**. The outer skin of a cell. It is **semipermeable***, i.e. selective about which substances it allows through.

Cytoplasm

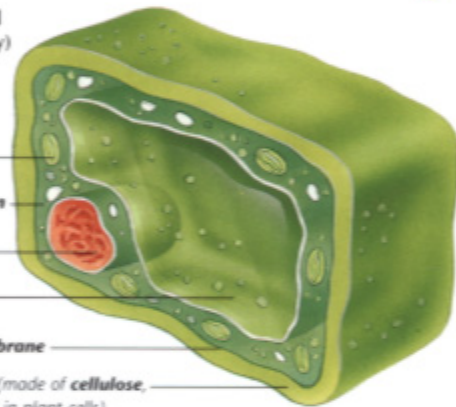
The material where all the chemical reactions vital to life occur (see **organelles**). It generally has a gel-like outer layer and a more liquid inner one (see **ectoplasm** and **endoplasm** – pictures, page 40).

Animal cell (cut away)



Plant cell (cut away)

- Plastid*
- Cytoplasm
- Nucleus
- Vacuole
- Cell membrane
- Cell wall (made of cellulose, only found in plant cells)



Nucleus (pl. nuclei)

The cell's control centre. Its double-layered outer skin (**nuclear membrane**) encloses a jelly-like fluid (**nucleoplasm** or **karyolymph**), which contains one or more **nucleoli*** and the genetic material **DNA***. This is held in **chromosomes*** – bodies which form a thread-like mass called **chromatin** when the cell is not dividing.

Vacuoles

Fluid-filled sacs in the **cytoplasm**. They are small and temporary in animal cells, and either transfer substances (see **Golgi complex**) or contain fluid brought in (see **pinocytosis**, page 101). Most plant cells have one large, permanent vacuole, filled with **cell sap** (dissolved minerals and sugars).

* Chromosomes, 96; DNA, 96 (Nucleic acids); Nucleoli, Plastids, 12; Semipermeable, 101 (Diffusion).

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