



# Western Australian Curriculum

## Science

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Glossary | Pre-primary–Year 10

For implementation in 2026

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Kaya. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

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## A–B

### **abiotic**

A non-living condition or thing in an ecosystem.

### **absorb**

To take energy into an object or material, such as light and heat.

### **accuracy**

How close a measurement is to the true or acceptable value.

### **adaptation**

A characteristic (structural, physiological or behavioural) that results in an individual being more likely to survive and reproduce in its environment.

### **allele**

Alternative form of a gene, such as tall (T) or short (t).

### **analyse**

Consider in detail for the purpose of finding meaning or relationships, and identifying patterns, similarities and differences.

### **anomaly**

Data point not consistent with the expected pattern or relationship.

### **argue**

Make a case, based on appropriate evidence, for and/or against some given point of view.

### **argument**

A claim justified with reference to evidence; scientific arguments are contestable.

### **atom**

The building block of matter, made up of protons, neutrons and electrons.

### **autosomal inheritance**

The inheritance of a trait controlled by a gene or genes carried on any chromosome that is not a sex chromosome.

**axis**

The imaginary straight line that a planet or body rotates about.

**behavioural adaptation**

The way an organism responds to external stimuli, such as huddling to keep warm.

**biotic**

The living components of ecosystems.

## C

### **change of state**

The change of a substance from one physical state of matter (solid, liquid, gas) to another.

### **changed variable**

A variable that is changed in an investigation to see what effect it has on the measured variable. Also known as the independent variable.

### **characteristic**

A distinguishing aspect (including features and behaviours) of an object, material, living thing or event.

### **chemical change**

A process that results in the formation of a new substance.

### **chemical property**

A trait displayed by a substance due to its chemical composition.

### **claim**

An assertion that something is true.

### **classify**

Arrange items into named categories in order to sort, group or identify them.

### **column graph**

A graph for organising and displaying discrete data.

### **compare**

Show how things are similar and different.

### **compound**

Two or more elements that are chemically combined.

### **conclusion**

A judgement based on evidence.

### **condensation**

The process where water vapour becomes liquid water.

### **conduction**

The process of energy movement within and between solid substances.

**conductor**

A material through which heat, sound or electrical energy is freely transferred.

**consumer**

A living thing that cannot make its own food and has to feed on other living things to survive.

**continuous data**

Quantitative data with a potentially infinite number of possible values along a continuum.

**contrast**

Show how things are different or opposite.

**control**

The sample in the investigation that the other samples are compared to.

**controlled variable**

A variable that is kept constant (or changed in constant ways) during an investigation.

**convection**

The process of energy movement through fluids such as liquids and gases.

**convention**

An agreed method of representing concepts, information and behaviours.

**correlate**

Demonstrate a mutual or complementary relationship.

**Country/Place**

A Country is a space mapped out by physical or intangible boundaries that individuals or groups of Aboriginal peoples occupy and regard as their own. It is a space with varying degrees of spirituality. A Place is a space mapped out by physical or intangible boundaries that individuals or groups of Torres Strait Islander peoples occupy and regard as their own. It is a space with varying degrees of spirituality.

## D

### **data**

A general term for a set of observations or measurements collected during an investigation.

### **decomposer**

A living thing that breaks down dead organic material, such as fungi or bacteria.

### **demonstrate**

Show by example.

### **dependent variable**

A variable that changes in response to changes to the independent variable in an investigation.

### **deposition**

The process in which sediments are laid down so that new landforms or landmasses are formed or modified.

### **describe**

Provide characteristics and features.

### **descriptive statistics**

Mathematical processes used to organise and summarise quantitative datasets, such as mean, mode, median, frequency, distribution, standard deviation and graphical representation.

### **design**

Plan and evaluate the construction of a product or process, including an investigation.

### **detritivore**

A living thing that feeds on and breaks down dead plant and animal remains, such as an earthworm or millipede.

### **dichotomous key**

A scientific tool used to identify and organise organisms into categories.

### **digital tools**

Digital hardware, software, platforms and resources used to develop and communicate learning, ideas and information.

### **discrete data**

Quantitative data consisting of a number of separate values where intermediate values are not permissible.

**discuss**

Talk over; identify issues and provide points for and/or against.

**dominant inheritance**

The trait that is expressed when only one copy of the dominant allele is found in the genotype.

**draw (conclusion)**

Come to a conclusion based on evidence.

## E

### **ecosystem**

Abiotic and biotic factors interacting with each other within an environment.

### **electromagnetic wave**

A transverse wave, consisting of oscillating electric and magnetic fields, that travels through the universe without the need for a medium.

### **element**

A substance made up of only one kind of atom that cannot be broken down into simpler substances by chemical means.

### **energy**

A measure of the ability to do work.

### **energy flow**

The transfer of energy from one organism to another in an ecosystem. The energy flow can be represented by a food chain.

### **energy transfer**

When energy moves from one place or system to another, such as heat transferring from the gas flame to the frying pan.

### **energy transformation**

When energy changes from one form to another, such as light energy to heat energy.

### **environment**

All the surroundings, both living and non-living.

### **erosion**

The process by which soil, rocks and other surface materials of Earth are worn away, such as by the action of water, glaciers, wind or waves.

### **ethical**

Principles, values and beliefs such as right, wrong, honesty, integrity, justice, equality, freedom, respect, truth, fairness, tolerance and loyalty.

### **evaluate**

Examine and judge the merit or significance of something, including processes, events, descriptions, relationships or data.

**evaporation**

The transfer of water from the surface of Earth to the atmosphere; thermal energy from the Sun causes liquid water to turn into water vapour and to rise up through the atmosphere.

**evidence**

Data that is considered reliable and valid, and that can be used to support a particular idea, conclusion or decision.

**explain**

Relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how.

**explanation**

An account of a phenomenon through descriptive statements about how that phenomenon came to be.

**explanatory model**

A description of why and how a thing works or an explanation of why a phenomenon is the way it is.

**explore**

Investigate, search for or evaluate, in detail.

**extrapolate**

Infer from what is known.

## F

### **fair test**

An investigation where one variable (the independent variable) is changed and all other conditions (the controlled variables) are kept the same; the dependent variable is what is measured or observed.

### **familiar**

Well-known; something that a student has encountered previously on a number of occasions.

### **food chain**

A sequence of organisms that begins with a producer and ends with a consumer and shows the direction of energy transfer/order in which living things depend on each other for food.

### **food web**

A representation of the feeding relationships in an ecosystem. A food web typically comprises multiple interconnected food chains.

### **force**

A push or pull between objects, which may cause one or both objects to change the speed and/or direction of their motion or change their shape.

### **formal measurement**

A measurement based on an agreed standard unit, such as metre, second or kilogram.

### **formal unit**

A unit of measurement based on an agreed fixed standard, such as metre, second or kilogram.

**gene**

A segment of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) that codes for a particular protein.

**global system**

A combination of interrelated, interdependent and interacting Earth systems – the biosphere, geosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere.

**graph**

A visual representation of the relationship between quantities plotted with reference to a set of axes.

**guided investigation**

An investigation partly directed by a teacher.

**habitat**

The natural environment of an organism such as a plant or animal.

**hazard**

Something that has the potential to do harm, such as boiling water splashing out of a beaker.

**hypothesis**

A tentative idea or explanation for an observation, which can be tested and either supported or refuted by investigation. For example, sunlight is necessary for seeds to germinate.

**identify**

Recognise and name.

**igneous rock**

Rock that has formed from cooled magma or lava.

**illustrate**

Similar to 'explain', but requires the quoting of specific examples or statistics, or possibly the drawing of maps, graphs, sketches etc.

**independent variable**

A variable that is changed in an investigation to see what effect it has on the dependent variable.

**inference**

An informed guess or logical conclusion based on previous experiences, observations and knowledge.

**informal measurement**

A measurement that is not based on any agreed standard unit, such as handspans, paces and cups.

**informal unit**

A unit of measurement based on variable quantities, such as handspans, paces and cups.

**insulator**

A material that inhibits the transfer of heat, sound or electrical energy.

**interaction**

A relationship between components within and/or between systems.

**interpret**

Draw meaning from.

**investigable question**

A question that leads to a practical investigation through the collection of qualitative and/or quantitative data, such as 'How do different lenses refract light?'

**investigate**

Explore an idea and draw conclusions.

**investigation**

A scientific process of answering a question, exploring an idea or solving a problem that requires activities such as planning, collecting and interpreting data and forming a conclusion.

**irreversible change**

A change that cannot be undone, where the material cannot be returned to its original condition, such as burning and tearing paper.

**justify**

Support an argument or conclusion; give reasons for your statements or comments.

## L

### **label**

Identify by placing a name or word used to describe the object or thing.

### **language feature**

A feature that supports meaning, such as clause- and word-level grammar, vocabulary, figurative language, punctuation and images. The choice to use specific language features will differ depending on the purpose, subject matter, audience and mode or medium.

### **law**

A statement describing invariable relationships between phenomena in specified conditions.

### **life cycle**

The predictable stages that each living thing follows, from offspring to adult.

### **line graph**

A graph for organising and displaying continuous data, representing the relationship between two variables.

### **list**

Provide a series of related words, names, numbers or items that are arranged one after the other.

### **local environment**

Surroundings that can be considered as proximal or familiar to the subject of investigation, such as an organism, mountain or student.

### **longitudinal wave**

A wave in which the vibration or displacement is in the direction of propagation, such as sound.

## M

### **mass**

The measure for how much matter an object contains. The International System of Units (SI) unit for mass is the kilogram (kg).

### **material**

A substance with particular qualities or that is used for specific purposes.

### **mathematical relationship**

A connection between variables or sets of information through the interpretation of graphical representations and/or performing calculations, such as  $F = ma$ .

### **matter**

A physical substance; anything that has mass and occupies space.

### **measure**

Obtain a metrical unit, such as size, dimension, quantity, degree or proportion.

### **measured variable**

A variable that changes in response to changes to the independent variable in an investigation. Also known as the dependent variable.

### **metamorphic rock**

Rock formed when exposed to high heat and pressure, changing its chemical and physical properties.

### **mixture**

Made up of two or more substances that are not chemically combined.

### **model**

A representation that describes, simplifies, clarifies or provides an explanation of the workings, structure or relationships within an object, system or idea.

### **modify**

Alter; change the form or quality.

### **molecule**

Two or more non-metal atoms chemically combined, such as H<sub>2</sub>O or CO<sub>2</sub>.

### **monohybrid inheritance**

The inheritance of a trait controlled by a single gene.

**name**

Provide a word or term used to identify an object, person, thing, place etc.

**natural resource**

A product or physical matter that comes from plants, animals or earth and has undergone very little modification by humans.

**observable**

Something that can be seen, heard, felt, tasted or smelled either directly by an individual or indirectly by a measuring device, such as a ruler, camera or thermometer.

**observation**

A representation of something that has been seen, heard, felt, tasted or smelled either directly by an individual or indirectly by a measuring device, such as a ruler, camera or thermometer.

**orbit**

The curved path taken by an object in space as it moves around another object, such as the Earth moving around the Sun.

**organise**

Order or arrange systematically.

**outlier**

A data point that is far from other data points in a set of data.

**outline**

Sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of.

## P

### **pattern**

A repeated occurrence or sequence.

### **phenomenon**

An observable occurrence or circumstance.

### **physical change**

A process that changes the form or state of a material but does not result in the formation of a new substance.

### **physical property**

A physical trait displayed by a substance, such as colour, hardness or lustre.

### **physiological adaptation**

The internal changes that take place in an organism in response to external stimuli, such as shivering.

### **population**

A group of organisms of one species that interbreed and live in the same place at the same time.

### **pose**

Put forward a question for consideration or investigation.

### **precipitation (chemistry)**

A process that occurs when an insoluble solid emerges from a liquid solution.

### **precipitation (water cycle)**

Liquid or frozen water in the atmosphere that falls to Earth as rain, hail or snow.

### **precision**

How close two or more measurements are to each other, regardless of whether those measurements are accurate.

### **prediction**

A suggestion of what might happen based on observations. For example, more seeds will germinate in the dark than in the light, or if a saturated solution cools quickly, then the crystals formed will be smaller.

**primary data**

Data collected directly by a person or group.

**primary source**

Information created by a person or persons directly involved in a study or observing an event.

**processed material**

A product of physical matter that has been modified from natural materials by human intervention or that does not occur at all in the natural environment but has been designed and manufactured to fulfil a particular purpose.

**producer**

A living thing that makes its own food, usually using energy from sunlight, such as a plant or alga.

**product**

A resulting substance from a chemical reaction.

**property**

An attribute of an object or material, normally used to describe attributes common to a group.

**propose**

Put forward for consideration or action, such as a point of view, idea, argument or suggestion.

**qualitative data**

Information that is not numerical in nature.

**quantitative data**

Numerical information.

**radiation**

The transfer of energy, in the form of electromagnetic radiation, without the need for a medium, such as a lizard using sunlight to increase its body temperature.

**reactant**

Substance involved in a chemical reaction.

**recessive inheritance**

The trait that is only expressed when two copies of the recessive allele are found in the genotype, except in sex-linked inheritance.

**reflected**

Changed direction of energy, such as light, heat and sound, when it bounces off a surface.

**reflect on**

Think carefully about something, such as past experiences, activities or events.

**refracted**

Changed direction (bending) of light when it passes through one transparent substance into another.

**relate**

Identify connections or associations between ideas or relationships or between components of systems and structures.

**relationship**

A connection or association between ideas or between components of systems and structures.

**reliability**

The extent to which repeated observations and/or measurements taken under identical circumstances will yield similar results.

**reliable data**

Data that have been judged to have a high level of reliability.

**repeatable investigation**

An investigation that produces the same results when repeated by the original researcher using the same method and equipment.

**repeat trial**

A test within an experimental investigation that is carried out more than once under the same set of conditions.

**replicable data**

Data that are able to be reproduced exactly.

**replicate**

An independent experiment that uses the same method in order to validate findings.

**represent**

Method for presentation of data.

**representation**

The means by which science ideas and explanations are understood and communicated. Representations can take many different forms or modes.

**reproducible investigation**

An investigation that produces similar results when repeated by other researchers using the same method and equipment.

**research**

Locate, gather, record and analyse information in order to develop understanding.

**reversible change**

A change that can be undone, where the material can be returned to its original condition, such as dissolution or a change of state.

**revolution (astronomy)**

The movement of a celestial object around a star or planet.

**risk**

The chance that somebody could be harmed by the hazard.

**risk assessment**

The identification and prevention of possible hazards involved in experiments or other activities.

**rotation (astronomy)**

The movement of a celestial body around its axis.

## S

### **scaled instrument**

A tool with markings used to measure specific quantities, such as a ruler, thermometer or kitchen scales.

### **scientific language**

Terminology that has specific meaning in a scientific context.

### **secondary data**

Data collected by a person or group other than the person or group using the data.

### **secondary source**

Information that has been compiled from primary sources by a person or persons not directly involved in the original study or event.

### **sedimentary rock**

Rock formed when fragments of rock and organic material are deposited in seas and lakes, and then compacted and cemented together.

### **sex-linked inheritance**

The trait controlled by a gene or genes carried on the sex chromosomes.

### **simulation**

A representation of a process, event or system that imitates the real situation.

### **soluble**

A substance that can dissolve in a liquid.

### **solute**

A soluble substance, such as sugar.

### **solution (chemistry)**

A liquid mixture formed when a solute dissolves in a solvent.

### **solvent**

The substance that dissolves the solute, such as water.

### **speciation**

The emergence of a new species.

**species diversity**

The variety of different species in an ecosystem.

**stimulus**

An internal or external change that causes a response.

**structural adaptation**

The physical/structural features an organism possesses that result in the organism being more likely to survive and reproduce in its environment, such as hair or fur to keep warm.

**survey**

An investigation method involving asking questions of a range of respondents.

**sustainable**

Supports the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to support their needs.

**system**

A group of interacting objects, materials or processes that form an integrated whole.

**table**

An arrangement of data or observations in rows and columns.

**testable question**

A specific question that can be answered through a fair test or direct observation, such as 'Do seeds need light to germinate?'

**theory**

A set of concepts, claims and/or laws that can be used to explain and predict a wide range of related observed or observable phenomena.

**tools**

Equipment used to make a task easier.

**transportation**

The movement of eroded sediments across Earth's surface by water, wind, ice or gravity.

**transverse wave**

A wave where the direction of oscillation is perpendicular to the direction of propagation.

**trend**

General direction in which something is changing.

**tropism**

The change in an organism's direction of growth in response to an external stimulus.

**uncertainty**

A situation in which something is not known or certain.

**validity**

The extent to which tests measure what was intended; the extent to which data, inferences and actions produced from tests and other processes are accurate.

**variable (experimental)**

A factor that can be changed, kept the same or measured in an investigation, such as time, distance, light or temperature.

**weathering**

The breaking down or dissolving of rocks on Earth's surface. This can occur through mechanical, chemical or biological processes.

**weight**

The force of gravity acting on an object. The SI unit for force is the newton (N).