



# CARL LINNAEUS



Born: 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1704 in Rashult, Sweden

Died: 10<sup>th</sup> January 1778 in Uppsala, Sweden

**Carl Linnaeus** was a Swedish botanist, physician and zoologist. He created two scientific systems: the system for classifying plants and animals and the system for naming all living things. Linnaeus is also called the Father of Systematic Botany. Botany is the study of plants.

## EARLY LIFE

His father was a Lutheran minister and an avid gardener. Linnaeus developed an interest in plants and animals at a young age. He was nicknamed “the little botanist” when he was 8 years old. After being home schooled until the age of 11, Linnaeus went to private school but hardly went to class as he preferred to be out in the fields studying plants and animals. In 1727 he began studying medicine. His medical studies included extensive lessons in botany – or the study of plants. Doctors then used medicines made from plants, so it was very important that they understood them.

## CARL LINNAEUS’S TRAVELS



In 1732, he was sent on a 5,000-mile (8,000-kilometer) botanical survey of Lapland (a region of northern Europe mostly within the Arctic Circle). The results of this journey were published in *Flora Lapponica* in 1737.

He began to develop a system of classifying plants and animals. He put them into the groups that are still used today – kingdoms, classes, orders, genera, and species.

## WHY ARE NAMES IMPORTANT?

If we didn’t know the names of all the animals, plants and fungi, we wouldn’t know when something was new, or if something had become extinct – we wouldn’t be able to measure life on the planet.

Carl Linnaeus created a system called **binomial** naming (bye-nome-al). Binomial means ‘two words’ and every plant and animal that he knew about was given a **genus** name and a **species** name, in Latin. Linnaeus’ system has made it easier for scientists all over the world to communicate about life on Earth.

Carl Linnaeus would look at a species and see what was different about it. It might be a certain colour, size, texture or be from a certain place. He would use this information in the binomial name.



How about this ladybird? In America, this is called a ladybug; in other countries it is a lady beetle. So how do we know it’s the same thing?

Its binomial name tells us: *Coccinella septempunctata*

Genus: *Coccinella* (co-chi-nella) means bright red

Species: *septempunctata* (sept-em-punk-tata) means seven points



## CAREER AND LEGACY



Linnaeus earned a medical degree in 1735 at a university in Holland where he was made director of a large botanical garden. Over the next few years, he published *Systema Naturae* (“System of Nature”) and *Genera Plantarum* (“Species of Plants”). In *Systema Naturae* Linnaeus presented a classification of three kingdoms of nature: stones, plants, and animals. Each kingdom was subdivided into classes, orders, genera, species, and varieties. This system is still used in biology, though it has been revised over the years.

Linnaeus’s most-lasting achievement was the creation of the binomial (two-name) classification system. In this

## Linnaeus’ classification system

- Each level is included in the level above it.
- Levels get increasingly specific from kingdom to species.



system, each living thing is assigned a name consisting of two Latin words. The first word is the genus to which the subject belongs. The second name is the specific species within that genus. For example, the human species is known as *Homo sapiens*.

## LATER LIFE

Carl wrote several volumes describing his findings and his system for organizing and naming forms of life. After medical school, Carl practiced medicine and became a highly respected university professor. He eventually became the Swedish royal family’s physician and was given a title of nobility. Many of his students went on expeditions around the world to gather plants.

## FIND OUT MORE...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LVunuIOT4w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVD6PP61A28>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOIjmmlmSgg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jo9LcWmnWTI>

## EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. When and where was Carl Linnaeus born?
2. What was Carl’s nickname when he was a young boy?
3. Linnaeus’s classification system works by each living thing being assigned a name consisting of two Latin words. What are the two Latin words?
4. List Carl’s published books.
5. What does binomial mean?