

Dear Student,

Thanks for contacting us about dissection. We're glad to know that you want to help "cut out dissection" in your school! It's becoming easier to refuse to dissect or experiment on animals. Other students have done it, and you can too.

Chances are that you are not the *first* person to refuse to dissect at your school, and you certainly won't be the last until a formal dissection-choice policy is put in place. It may be hard to get the ball rolling, but animals need you to encourage such policies by refusing to dissect. One of the most meaningful actions that you can take is to assert your right to an education that does not violate your ethical principles. The following are steps that you can take to express your opposition to dissection:

- Learn the facts about dissection by studying the enclosed information, and then contact your dean of students for a copy of your school's current dissection policy. Find out what the goals of the lesson plans involving dissection are, what kinds of animals are used, how much the animals cost, and who supplies them. This information will help you offer appropriate alternatives to animal use. Unfortunately, there are no laws to protect college students' right to refuse to dissect, but schools like Sarah Lawrence College and Virginia Commonwealth University have adopted dissection-choice policies. We encourage other schools to adopt similar policies as well.
- If you are required to dissect, meet with your professor as early as possible and tell him or her that you cannot participate in the dissection because cutting up animals violates your "strongly held religious and moral beliefs about the sanctity of life," and ask for a humane, non-animal alternative. State your position in writing calmly and politely (see the enclosed sample letter), and ask for a prompt response. Make it clear that watching others cut up animals is not an acceptable alternative and that you should be provided with an alternative assignment to learn the subject matter.
- If your professor tries to force you to participate in the dissection, arrange to meet with the head of the biology department or your dean of students. Also, be sure to let your student government know that, as one of its constituents, you believe that the faculty is being unfair. Remember to keep copies of all correspondence and to take notes during all meetings and conversations.
- If you still need help, contact the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) at 707-795-2533. The ALDF may be able to put you in touch with an attorney in your area who is willing to help you. These cases are more likely to be resolved with a simple phone call than with a trip to court.

Your hard work will make a big difference for animals. We wish you the best in your efforts to end dissection. Please contact us at College@peta2.com if you have any questions or need more information or advice.

Sincerely,

The peta2 Staff

The Lowdown on Dissection

Millions of animals are killed and dissected in schools each year.

Today, many students protest and educators question the destruction of life in the name of education. People are concerned not only about taking the life of innocent animals but also about the pain and suffering that animals usually experience on the way to the dissection table.

Dissection Hurts Animals

Animals used in the dissection industry suffer terribly before they reach the classroom. PETA's undercover investigation of one major biological supply company exposed gross cruelty to live animals who were received and killed at the facility—even after facility officials stated that no live animals were accepted there. Because of the video footage from the investigation, veterinarians from the U.S. Department of Agriculture testified that the company pumped formaldehyde into cats while they were still alive. If you would like to borrow a copy of the video “Classroom Cut-Ups” to share with your professor or a member of the administration, please e-mail College@peta2.com.

Where Do They Come From?

Here in the U.S., most animals are raised specifically for dissection or captured in the wild, while others are purchased from fur farmers and factory farmers, supporting two horrific industries that kill billions of animals and destroy the environment. Still other animals are collected from animal shelters that have euthanized them or by people called “bunchers,” who answer “free to a good home” ads and pick up stray animals and companion animals who have wandered off.

It's not much different in the U.K.—many schools refuse to rear or kill the animals themselves, obtaining them from specialist suppliers instead. The breeding and killing of animals at the hands of these suppliers causes the animals unbearable stress and suffering—they're usually raised in extremely crowded, barren cages—and their deaths are equally horrific. In the U.K., methods of killing include the use of chloroform or ether, dislocation of the neck, suffocation with carbon dioxide, stunning, and freezing.

Dissection May Hurt Students

Animals used for dissection are often embalmed with formaldehyde or a chemical derived from formaldehyde, a preservative linked to cancers of the throat, lungs, and nasal passages as well as a variety of other health problems. In addition to the potential for harmful physical effects on individuals, there are important psychological issues to consider. Classroom dissection desensitizes students to the sanctity of life. Research has shown that a significant number of students at every educational level are uncomfortable with the use of animals in dissection and experimentation. Studies also suggest that exposing young people to animal dissection as “science” can foster callousness towards animals and nature in some and dissuade others from pursuing careers in science.

Dissection Destroys the Environment

Frogs are the most commonly dissected animals. The removal of frogs from ecosystems disrupts nature's delicate balance. Populations of insects skyrocket, resulting in increased crop destruction, pesticide use, and spread of disease. In addition, the way that animal corpses and toxic chemicals are disposed of in some schools and supply houses is of public concern. Careless disposal of toxic substances can contaminate groundwater and soil, threaten food supplies, and endanger wildlife.

The Bottom Line

It is not ethical to dissect animals (frogs, cats, pigs, sharks, worms, etc.) who have been tortured and killed so that students can cut them up to learn about human or animal anatomy. These animals haven't donated their bodies to science, and whether they were bred for dissection, captured as strays, or taken from their natural habitat, they all still suffer and deserve to live free of pain, fear, and exploitation.

How to Answer Common Arguments Against Alternatives to Dissection

Argument: You're just being squeamish.

Believing that dissection is wrong has nothing to do with being afraid or squeamish; for many students, dissection violates deeply held principles. Furthermore, it is quite normal to be repulsed by something that you find morally offensive.

Argument: If we make an exception for you, other students will claim that they have the right to be excluded from all sorts of requirements.

This doesn't address the issue at hand: the students' right not to be forced to violate their beliefs as part of their education. There's no limit on how many people are allowed to exercise their rights, and you can't take away rights because many students are exercising them. Furthermore, the objection is not to the content of what is being taught, but to the methodology used. If a student can learn the same information through means that are equally (and often more) effective, then this should be respected.

Argument: Students aren't qualified to determine whether or not dissection is a necessary part of the curriculum.

Students are entitled to speak up when asked to do something that violates their beliefs. If they are "qualified" enough to participate, then they are "qualified" enough to decide whether they object to participation on moral grounds. It would be difficult for anyone to keep up with the rapid development of alternatives to the use of animals, so students should be allowed to participate in their educational process by suggesting alternatives as they find them. A number of studies also prove that alternatives to dissection are more efficient and cost-effective teaching tools than the use of animals is. You can learn more about this at http://www.pcrm.org/resch/anexp/cost_analysis.html.

Argument: Dissection wouldn't be taught if it weren't an important part of the curriculum.

Teaching techniques are constantly evolving and should be reevaluated regularly. Countless students are educated every year at top undergraduate, medical, and veterinary schools without dissecting animals. Higher education is all about critical thinking, and students should be commended for their efforts to find better ways to learn.

Argument: There is no substitute for laboratories that use animals.

Actually, there are many substitutes, including detailed physical models of animal anatomy, cell cultures, and computer simulations. Furthermore, once students reach the level of education at which they're required to learn specialized methodologies, they will be working with medical doctors, veterinarians, epidemiologists, etc., to learn the techniques of their field.

Argument: There are no suitable alternatives.

Nearly every comparative study has concluded that non-animal learning methods, including virtual dissection software, are equivalent or, in many cases, superior to traditional animal dissection in their ability to provide students with an understanding of anatomy and complex biological processes. And new alternatives are being developed every day. The Alternatives in Education Database from the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights and the Norwegian Inventory of Audiovisuals contains thousands of alternatives to animal use in education. Many institutions and organizations offer alternatives for everything from a basic anatomical comparison to a complex behavioral laboratory. (Most instructors who use this argument haven't considered any particular alternatives, so ask what specific alternatives the professor has considered and rejected and why.) See peta2's "Info on Alternatives" page online for more information.

Argument: The student's claim to be a conscientious objector is inconsistent; he or she eats meat, wears leather, eats dairy products, etc.

Religious freedom means that you can subscribe to any set of views. If a student believes that it is immoral to wear fur or dissect animals but acceptable to wear leather shoes, no one can dictate a different set of moral values to that student. Everyone has the right to draw the line according to his or her conscience. Of course, it would be great if everyone would stop supporting every cruel practice in the world, but steps must be taken in the course of educating people about compassionate choices.

Argument: The school doesn't have enough money in its budget to purchase alternatives.

Many groups make alternatives available on loan to students who need them. And alternatives to dissection are more economical over time; many students can make use of one CD-ROM, for instance, but dissection requires that multiple animals be purchased time after time.

Have questions that still need answers? No problem—just e-mail College@peta2.com and we'll be glad to help.

Letter to Instructor (Adapt it for your situation.)

[Date]

[Name of Instructor]

[Department Name]

[School Name]

[Address]

Dear _____:

I am enrolled in [name of class]. I have just learned that all students are required to participate in an assignment involving dissection. I will be unable to participate in the dissection because of my sincerely held religious and moral beliefs about the sanctity of all life.

I respectfully request that you provide me with an alternative that will not involve my direct or indirect participation in the dissection of any animal that has been killed for the purpose of a classroom dissection or at a slaughterhouse. Because my objection is not to the content of the lesson but to the way in which it will be taught, I would be happy to suggest alternatives. I would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

[Your Signature]

[Your Name]

[Your E-Mail]

[Your Phone Number]

Letter to the Editor of Your School Paper (Adapt it for your situation.)

[Date]

Letters to the Editor
[Name of Newspaper]
[Address]

Dear Editor:

Animal dissection, which was first used in classrooms in the early part of the last century, is still being used in some [Name of School] classes. In recent years, dissection has been increasingly scrutinized. Experts have reevaluated the educational worth and morality of cutting up animals just to “see how they work.”

Compassionate students want to study biology without dissecting animals. Sophisticated computer simulations, videodiscs, and models have been developed to meet the needs of these students. All the studies of this issue show that students who use alternatives perform as well as or better than students who use dissection.

Biology is the study of life and should teach respect for life, not devalue it by treating living beings as disposable objects. By using humane teaching methods, instructors can teach science and ethics simultaneously.


Sincerely,

[Your Signature]
[Your Name]
[Your Daytime Phone Number]

Sample Student Choice Policy

When you see it in writing, a choice policy seems like a pretty logical thing to ask for, doesn't it? Read over our sample policy and adapt it as you feel appropriate. It's important to push for a policy in writing because this makes it easier for other students to refuse to harm or destroy animals and ensures that there will be no misunderstandings.


1. Students shall have the right to be excused from participating in any lesson, exercise, or assessment requiring the student to dissect, vivisection, or otherwise harm or destroy an animal or any part of an animal, or to observe these activities, as part of a course of instruction.
2. Any student who chooses to refrain from participation in or observation of a portion of a course of instruction that involves animals shall be offered a non-animal, alternative education project for the purpose of providing the student with the factual knowledge, information, or experience required by the course of study. Requiring the student to watch others dissect is not an alternative; the student must be allowed to leave the room while the dissection is taking place.
3. The responsibility for creating an alternative, non-animal learning exercise lies primarily with the department; however, students should be expected to assist instructors in finding the best alternative.
4. Students will not be penalized or ostracized in any way for choosing the alternative exercise. Students' decision not to dissect shall be respected by all school faculty and administration, and the students shall be treated in a nonjudgmental manner.
5. All students must be informed in writing of their option to choose not to participate in exercises that involve harming or destroying animals at the beginning of each semester during which these projects are scheduled, a minimum of three weeks prior to animal use. This information should be included in the course syllabus, on the course's Web page, and in the college course book and will reassure students majoring in biology and psychology—as well as *all* current and potential students—that they won't be forced to participate in any harmful animal use. Students will be encouraged to enroll in courses without fear of having to compromise their beliefs.
6. Those instructors who continue to use animals in their classes must verbally announce the policy to all students on the first day of the semester and on the day of any animal laboratories.



CUT CLASS, NOT FROGS

Everybody knows that dissection is gross, but did you know that it also hurts animals? Millions of healthy animals are killed every year just so that they can be cut up in classrooms. But it's easy to stick up for animals by refusing to dissect them. Read more to find out how!

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH

DISSECTION?

The frogs, cats, rats, and other animals who are killed for dissection suffer terribly before they are delivered to schools.

Every year, frogs are snatched from their homes in rivers and ponds—which totally disrupts the ecosystem—only to be thrown away after being cut apart. Other animals are bred solely for the purpose of being killed and sold for classroom science experiments. An undercover investigation found some cats being injected with formaldehyde **while they were still alive**; other animals were held underwater until they drowned. Some pounds and animal shelters even sell cats and dogs to be killed for dissection instead of trying to find them homes. If you dissect animals in science class, you are unwittingly contributing to this cruelty.

BETTER WAYS TO LEARN

More and more students are saying, "No!" to dissection. Most instructors and schools offer humane alternatives to dissection—including computer programs, films, diagrams, and realistic or larger-than-life models—that have repeatedly been shown to be educationally superior to cutting up animals. Some states—including California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia—have laws that

require K-12 schools to provide students with humane alternatives to dissection. Even in other states, most instructors will provide you with an alternative—all you have to do is ask! Many colleges have similar policies in place as well.

If you don't want to dissect animals, ask your instructor for a humane alternative. If you have any trouble, please contact us at peta2@peta2.com and we'll help you out. That's what we're here for!

GET INVOLVED

Please contact us at peta2@peta2.com if you want to help get a policy passed at your school requiring that students be given the right not to dissect animals. You can also contact us if you'd like some free stickers, DVDs, or other good stuff.

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Cost Analysis of Dissection Versus Nonanimal Teaching Methods

PHYSICIANS COMMITTEE FOR RESPONSIBLE MEDICINE

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As more and more educators explore the benefits of nonanimal alternatives to dissection, software companies respond by developing ever more impressive technologies. New programs offer stunning educational advantages while reducing costs and decreasing reliance on animals. Alternatives cost thousands less than dissection, last for years, and several groups of students can use them simultaneously during each academic year. With nonanimal dissection methods, students can perform the lessons at their own speed, easily make-up missed classes, and review the programs until they have a firm grasp of the material. Students gain considerable computer experience and teachers have the flexibility to choose the anatomical detail appropriate for their class and grade level.

Although the initial cost of implementing a computer system is sometimes higher than that of dissection, over time, school systems reap financial benefits as multiple groups of students can use these same programs year after year. The following chart describes the average expense of using alternatives vs. traditional animal dissection over a 5-year period.

FROG	DISSECTIONWORKS DELUXE*	ANIMAL DISSECTION
1st year (initial purchase)	\$2099	\$1,146
2nd year	\$0	\$310.50
3rd year	\$0	\$310.50
4th year	\$0	\$310.50
5th year	\$0	\$310.50
TOTAL COSTS	\$2099	\$2,387

*DissectionWorks Deluxe is a top-end package that offers numerous dissection alternatives and can be used by various science classrooms during the same school year.

For administrators of elementary and secondary schools, budget concerns may become the greatest impetus for introducing alternatives to animal dissection. As budgets become smaller, computerized laboratories can alleviate the cost of maintaining a yearly animal supply. In the process these programs allow younger pupils to learn about animal anatomy and ecosystems at an earlier stage in science education. Instead of supplying the animals to one or two 8th grade classrooms, schools can incorporate innovative and technologically advanced teaching techniques into the science curriculum in lower grades. Students will not only have the opportunity to learn about the life sciences in early education, they will gain computer skills and see their application in the field of science.

Listed on the back are estimated cost savings for some of the most common animal dissections. Note that computer alternatives are one-time investments while animals and some dissection materials must be purchased every year. For more information on the alternatives listed on the back, please visit www.DissectionAlternatives.org, or contact the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine at 202-686-2210.

Estimated cost savings for some of the most common animal dissections

ANIMAL	ALTERNATIVE AND COST	DISSECTION AND COST (30 STUDENTS)	COST SAVINGS AFTER 5 YEARS**
Frog*	DissectionWorks Deluxe* \$2,099 The Digital Frog2 \$899 Operation: Frog (Deluxe) \$659 VisiFrog \$559	Dissection Set \$444 Dissection Pans \$385 Dissection Pins \$6 30 Frogs (per year for 5 years) \$1,552 Total Cost \$2,387	TOTAL SAVINGS: \$288 - \$1,828
Fetal Pig*	DissectionWorks Deluxe* \$2,099 Fetal Pig by Ventura \$560	Dissection Set \$444 Dissection Pans \$568 Dissection Pins \$6 Hook and Chain Set \$66 30 Fetal Pigs (per year for 5 years) \$2,100 Total Cost \$3,184	TOTAL SAVINGS: \$1,085 - \$2,624
Cat	Cat Dissection Lab \$5,500 CatWorks \$1,500 Cat Lab \$1,500	Dissection Set \$444 Dissection Pans \$568 Dissection Pins \$6 Hook and Chain Set \$66 30 Cats (per year for 5 years) \$4,650 Total Cost \$5,734	TOTAL SAVINGS: \$234 - \$4,234
Earthworm*	Earthworm by Ventura \$560	Dissection Set \$444 Dissection Pans \$385 Dissection Pins \$6 30 Earthworms (per year for 5 years) \$130 Total Cost \$965	TOTAL SAVINGS: \$405
Crayfish and Perch*	Marine Life: Anatomy of a Fish \$560	Dissection Set \$444 Dissection Pans \$385 Dissection Pins \$6 30 Crayfish (per year for 5 years) \$1,095 Total Cost \$1,930	TOTAL SAVINGS: \$1,370

* DissectionWorks Deluxe includes five animal dissection simulations: frog, fetal pig, earthworm, crayfish, and perch.

** Assumes annual replacement of animals and no replacement of equipment.

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