



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Dissection: Want to Know a Simple Way to Say No Way?

If you're a student in the U.S., chances are you'll be told at some point to dissect a preserved animal "specimen" in a biology class. Do you really want to? Steph, Courtney, Jon, and Samantha don't, and they're in good company. More and more students, teachers, and parents are turning away from dissection—and for excellent reasons. What's wrong with dissection? Basically, everything.

Dissection causes animal suffering and death.

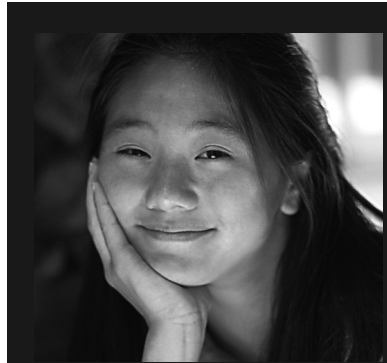
Every year millions of animals are killed to be used for dissection in schools. Investigators have discovered suppliers drowning cats in burlap sacks, injecting rats with embalming fluid, and keeping frogs for weeks without food.

Dissection devalues life.

Dissection teaches that animals are disposable objects. Many students decide not to pursue careers in medicine, veterinary medicine, or nursing when they find out their studies will involve dissecting animals. Dissection may be turning these students away from professions where their compassion is most needed.

Dissection is bad for the environment.

Many of the animals harmed or killed for classroom use are caught in the wild, often in large numbers. Plus, the chemicals used to preserve animals are unhealthy (formaldehyde, for example, irritates the eyes, nose, and throat).



I think dissection is unnecessary and inhumane. Some students are more sensitive to the well-being of animals than others are, and because of that, they should be provided with an alternative.

Dissection is a waste of money.

You can dissect an animal only once, but alternatives such as computer simulations, 3D models, and

videotapes can be used over and over. These materials will pay for themselves within a year or two. For the average school, replacing dissection with alternatives can save thousands of dollars.

Dissection is *not* the best way to learn.

More than 25 published studies confirm that students using alternatives learn anatomy and physiology as well as—or better than—students who use animals. This isn't surprising: Unlike dissection, alternative exercises can be repeated and show the continuous processes of life, such as how a heart beats.

THREE SIMPLE STEPS

If you don't want to dissect animals, you aren't alone. Each year, thousands of students request alternatives, and studies show that for every student who speaks out, several others would prefer not to dissect. Don't be surprised if other students want to join you in requesting alternatives. Here's how to go about it:

1. Make a list.

What are the reasons you object to dissection? Any one of the reasons listed above is valid, but a combination of them makes an even stronger case. Avoid taking the position that you can't do the dissection. While you may find the idea of dissecting animals "gross" or unpleasant (and these are valid feelings), yours is a position of principle and courage. It's not that you *can't* dissect animals—it's that you *won't*.



Dissection is a waste of life. If students can opt out of Family Life Education, why not dissection? I observe more students playing around, joking, and trying to gross one another out during dissection than learning anything.



If I were told to dissect, I'd ask for an alternative assignment. With the technology available today, dissection has no value except so people can say they did it.

2. Get the scoop early.

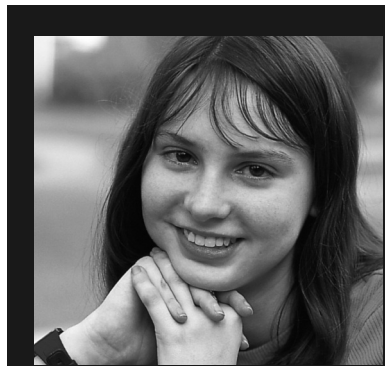
As soon as possible (preferably before the class begins), ask your teacher about the class requirements. If dissection is part of the course, is it optional? Explain politely and firmly why you would like to do an alternative project. Be clear, positive, and respectful. The biggest problem your teacher may have with your request is not knowing what alternative to use. Offer to provide one—contact The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) for information on our Humane Education Loan Program (HELP).

3. Don't give up!

If your teacher refuses to grant your request for an alternative, seek support. Your parents may be willing to talk to your teacher or the school principal. You may also contact us: call 301-721-6439, e-mail ari@humanesociety.org, or write to The HSUS, 2100 L Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037.

You Really Can Make a Difference

You may be able to persuade your school to adopt a policy requiring teachers to offer dissection alternatives. You may even get dissection eliminated altogether! Many schools have taken this step. Work with other students who want humane alternatives. Write editorials for local and school newspapers and meet with your principal and teachers. Remember that by taking a stand on dissection, you're doing a great service to animals and the environment. You're improving the quality of education, too.



The values of a student should be taken seriously. I don't believe that dissection will teach me anything worth the price of an animal's life, especially when anatomy can be learned from a book or a computer. A student who is forced to dissect generally won't take much of a part in the dissection.



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