

Terminology

The following are some key terms that will help you as you conduct your research:

Heredity: The process of transferring genetic information from one generation to another.

Gene: A unit of heredity; also, a region of DNA that is transcribed as a unit.

Allele: One of several forms of a gene; different alleles can be responsible for different forms of a trait. (example: variation in hair color)

Genotype: The genetic information carried by the cells of a living organism.

Phenotype: The observable characteristics that come from a given genotype.

Natural Selection: Differential survival and reproduction of some individuals over others in a population based on their phenotypic differences.

Polymorphism: Phenotypic or genetic variation in a population. The variation can either be neutral (natural selection does not favor one form or another), or it can be a variation that natural selection can operate on.

Evolution: Phenotypic or genotypic changes in a lineage of organisms over successive generations.

Adaptation: The process by which a species evolves traits that make it more suited to surviving in its habitat.

Population: A group of organisms of the same species inhabiting the same area.