

Dissection & Students' Rights

You don't have to dissect animals

There are options

There are alternatives




If you don't want to dissect, you're not alone!

In a recent teen survey, 86 percent of the students polled said that schools should give students the option to use alternatives to dissection.

Dissect This!

- ✓ Animalearn is working hard to help give every student from kindergarten through college the right to say NO to dissection. Several states have student choice laws and other states are considering similar legislation.
- ✓ Over 500 state of the art non-animal alternatives to dissection exist today because of high demand from individuals who want to enhance their educational experience without harming animals.
- ✓ Non-animal alternatives to dissection not only benefit animals, but they are also much more cost effective, environmentally safe, and educationally effective than dissecting a once-living animal.
- ✓ More and more educators and students are discovering a kinder way to teach and study science by implementing non-animal alternatives in today's classrooms.

Making the Decision to Say No to Dissection



Students from all educational levels may be faced with the ethical dilemma of whether or not to participate in the dissection of animals. A growing number of students and educators are choosing to cut out traditional dissection methods in favor of non-animal alternatives.

Many students say no to dissection because they are aware that animals are often killed specifically for dissection purposes, and the animals used often experience tremendous suffering before they are killed.

Frogs, earthworms, crayfish, fetal pigs, and cats can be obtained from the wild, slaughterhouses, shelters, or are purposely bred in facilities that profit from their sale. Also, many companion animals can be the target of animal dealers who make money from stealing and selling them for use in dissection.

Whatever reasons you may have for choosing not to dissect, there are steps you can take to cut out cruelty in the classroom!

Legal Protection for Students

Many students from K-12 have the legal right to refuse to dissect a once-living animal. Student choice laws exist in California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia, and other states are considering similar legislation. Visit www.animalearn.org/lawsandlegislation.php for the latest information on student choice bills. Additionally, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Mexico offer informal policies. Individual students have pushed for the development of these student choice laws. Students play an important role in their education, and their choices can make a significant difference for animals.

Typically, these student choice laws require schools to notify students and/or their parents at the beginning of courses involving animal dissection. Students are able to use a humane alternative instead of dissecting an animal, and are not penalized for making this decision.

If you live in a state that does not have a legal policy intact, you can still object to dissection. In many cases, students living in states that do not have protective policies have been successful in encouraging their teachers to allow them to use alternatives to dissection. Some students have even succeeded in banning dissection at their schools through their efforts.

College and university students can also make a difference for animals used in education. Unlike elementary and secondary schools, most colleges and universities do not have an overriding school code that is dictated by a state or overarching governing body. As a result, individual institutions prescribe their own guidelines on dissection and vivisection in the classroom.

Students across the U.S. have attempted to implement student choice options at colleges and universities, and many have succeeded in their efforts. Due to the persistence of students and/or student groups, Cornell University, Hofstra University, Sarah Lawrence College, University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, Virginia Commonwealth University, and many others have student choice policies in place, ensuring the rights of future students who do not want to harm animals in their education.



Alternatives to Dissection

There are hundreds of alternatives for educators and students to use in place of dissection specimens including CD-ROMs, models, videos, charts, and much more at every educational level.

With interactive and comprehensive alternatives, students gain a far greater understanding and respect for animals than with traditional dissection.

The Science Bank (www.TheScienceBank.org) is Animalearn's free lending program of alternatives to dissection and other harmful animal usage. The Science Bank enables educators and students to try out the most cutting-edge products available.

The Benefits of Using Alternatives

While objecting to dissection may be an ethical decision, many educators and administrators need additional reasons to justify the use of non-animal alternatives. When trying to encourage your school or university to consider these options, be sure to also address the issue of cost savings and educational benefits, as well as the negative impact that dissection can have on the environment.

Lower School Budgets

Educators and administrators often make curriculum decisions based on the school budget, and many may be interested to learn that using alternatives to animal dissection could save their school thousands of dollars over a three-year period. Animalearn has a cost comparison sheet assessment, which proves the cost benefit of using alternatives. Instead of purchasing animals each year for use in the classroom, alternatives only need to be purchased once and can be re-used every year, which saves the school from needless expenditures.

Improve Life Science Education

In at least 30 research studies published in scientific journals that compared learning levels of students using alternatives to dissection and students dissecting animals, dissection alternatives were found to be more educationally effective. Over 50 percent showed higher learning levels for students using the alternatives, while the remainder of the studies showed similar learning levels. This is important information for educators, administrators, and school board members because improvements in education are strong reasons to adopt new policies.

**There are hundreds of alternatives
for educators and students....**



Help Preserve our Environment

Chemicals used to preserve dead specimens, such as formaldehyde and formalin (diluted form of formaldehyde) are respiratory irritants, carcinogens, and environmental pollutants. Careless or irresponsible disposal of these preservatives or animal remains can contaminate water and soil and potentially harm wildlife.

Additionally, many frogs used for dissection are wild-caught. This in turn creates an adverse effect on frog populations, which can upset an entire ecosystem. By using non-animal alternatives you are making a positive impact not only for the animals, but also for the environment!

What You Can Do

Whether you are a student, a parent, or an educator who is concerned about the use of animals in education, there are a number of things that you can do to help end this practice.

If You Are A Student

- ✓ **Voice your objections early!** As a student who has ethical concerns regarding animal dissection, the first thing you must do is tell your teacher or professor as soon as you are made aware that dissections are part of your coursework. By simply speaking out about this issue, you are not only taking a stand for the animals, but also for your own right to freedom of expression.
- ✓ **Talk to others about your decision, especially parents or guardians.** It really makes a difference to have support from others, especially if you are a jr. high or high school student and are apprehensive about approaching your teacher alone. It also helps to talk about this issue with others who may feel as you do. The more students object to dissection, the more educators will want to explore the possibility of using alternatives to dissection.
- ✓ **Spread awareness about dissection!** Start an animal rights group at your school and pass out literature on the subject. Show a video about the horrors of dissection. Write a letter to the editor in your school paper and/or your local paper on the subject. Have students, teachers, and/or others in your community sign a petition in support of alternatives to dissection.

With persistence you WILL definitely see a change, which will ultimately help the animals from being used in your classroom!



If You Are a Parent/Guardian

Parents or guardians can be extremely effective in urging their child's teacher or school to use alternatives to dissection.

✓ **Schedule a meeting with the teacher to explain why you support your child's decision to say no to dissection!**

If a child is apprehensive about talking with his/her teacher or is not successful in doing so, then the parent should make an appointment with the instructor.

✓ **Gather information from Animalearn to give to the teacher.**

At the meeting, make sure to note that Animalearn can provide the teacher with suitable alternatives free of charge for your child. If the teacher is leery about the quality or effectiveness of alternatives, let him or her know that Animalearn will also loan out alternatives for the teacher to examine beforehand.

✓ **If the teacher is still unwilling to allow your child to use alternatives, make an appointment with the principal of the school.**

Bring a letter documenting your meeting with your child's teacher. Let the principal know that you support your child's decision to opt out of dissection and inform him or her that there are several other states that give students this option. Usually a parent or guardian will receive compliance from the teacher or principal, but if not, you can always bring the issue to the school board.

✓ **Go to a school board meeting and persuade them to pass a student choice policy for ALL students who do not want to dissect, not just your own.**

Even if your child is given the opportunity to use alternatives to dissection, you may want to go to a school board meeting and try to persuade the board members to implement a student choice policy or possibly even ban dissection for the entire school district. Animalearn will assist you in your efforts to effectively work with school administrators to create a student choice policy.

When a parent or guardian takes a stand on an issue, administrators often pay attention. Therefore, parents and guardians can and DO make a significant impact on the use of animals in education.

Take a compassionate stance for animals used in education!



If You Are An Educator

Educators from elementary to university levels are becoming more open to using technological and alternative methods of teaching science, biology, and other subjects where live or dead animals are used. Yet there are still many who prefer the traditional methods of slicing up dead specimens. If you care about the welfare of animals and/or you want to guide those students who do not want to participate in dissection laboratories, you can take action.

- ✓ **Offer dissection alternatives to your students.**
If you are open to using alternatives to dissection in your classroom, then you are already helping animals by decreasing the numbers of animals killed for dissection purposes.
- ✓ **Voice your concerns to the principal, dean, or university president.**
Even if you do not teach science, but feel that dissection and other harmful animal use in your educational facility is unjust, talk to the appropriate decision makers about taking the necessary steps to address this issue.
- ✓ **Write a letter of support for the student(s) who may want to pass a student choice policy.**
Since you are an educator, your opinion will most likely be highly considered, especially if you have used the alternatives and find them extremely cost effective and overall more efficient than wet labs.

If you have a student(s) in your classroom who wants to pass a student choice policy, you CAN be a valuable asset to that student(s) by providing your opinion and support.

Take a compassionate stance for animals used in education! If you object to using animals for educational purposes, follow the steps above to ensure that more high-quality, humane alternatives to dissection are used!



Perspectives

How do students, parents, educators, and doctors feel about alternatives to dissection?

Nancy Harrison, MD • Pathologist • San Diego, CA

"Computerized dissection alternatives have grown so sophisticated they now surpass traditional wet dissections in many ways. No student should be forced to participate in the academically inferior teaching mode of animal dissection. Serious pre-meds and pre-vets can best master the dissection by repeatedly studying the superb images found on CD-ROMs."

Bonnie Berenger • Science Teacher • Hunterdon Central Regional High School, NJ

"Providing students with progressive alternatives to traditional animal dissection, has proven very effective in my classroom. By respecting the ethics of students and offering such options, students seem relaxed and comfortable, and are therefore encouraged to learn. This atmosphere is empowering and stimulating."

**Dr. Kathleen T. Brown • Professor and Dept. Head • Dept. of Natural Science
Georgia Military College–Augusta Community College, GA**

"We have recently abandoned animal specimen dissection in our anatomy and physiology courses in favor of virtual dissection. The student response to this decision has been extremely favorable and the faculty are impressed with the versatility and thoroughness of these products. We are very glad to have made this decision and believe it is a most worthwhile investment that is already enhancing our program."

Allyson Kirk • Student–Science Bank Borrower • Northern Virginia Community College, VA

"After a lot of work and persistence, Northern VA Community College allowed me to use the fetal pig alternative provided to me by Animalearn. I returned to class and took the same test the rest of the students did. Success! I received the highest grade in the class: 100 percent."

Genevieve Stark • Student–Science Bank Borrower • Holy Cross Catholic School, KS

"I learned just as much, if not more, from the alternatives. Plus I received an A for a grade."

Mark Davis • Student–Science Bank Borrower • Hudson Valley Community College, NY

"When an internet site sent me to Animalearn, I felt ecstatic and relieved. My professor, who was initially skeptical about alternatives, was totally impressed with the dissection programs, and I scored a 10/10 on the rat dissection quiz the following week."

Heidi Krieger • Parent–Science Bank Borrower • Canada

"I am ever so grateful to your dedication and commitment to treating animals more humanely (non-violently), and for providing the quality of educational support to students of all ages that you do. The quality of your products exceeded my expectations and gave more information than my daughter would have needed to complete her assignment."

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