



## Alternatives to Dissection



Imagine you're in science class. The teacher places everyone in groups, and you start wondering what exciting project you're going to do. Your teacher gives each group a scalpel, forceps, a sheet of instructions and a tray with something in it. With scalpel in hand, you are faced with a tough decision—should you or shouldn't you dissect? You might not be sure. You might prefer not to dissect the animal because you don't feel comfortable, or strongly believe it is wrong. But, maybe you're afraid not to dissect because it might affect your grade. Worried? Confused? Guess what? You are not alone! And there are alternatives!

Students deal with the issue of dissection every semester. Many decide not to dissect. Read on to find out what you, your friends, parents and teachers can do to eliminate or reduce the use of animals in the classroom.

### Right to Refuse Dissection

Several states have policies in place to protect students who do not want to participate in classroom dissection. Pennsylvania, California, Florida, Rhode Island, Illinois, Virginia, Oregon, New York, New Jersey and Vermont have passed state laws requiring schools to offer alternatives to animal dissection. And in Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, New Mexico and Louisiana, there are resolutions—which are not as strong as laws, but equally effective—also allowing students to refuse to dissect. If you live in any of these states, your grade is guaranteed not to suffer if you opt out of dissection and complete an alternate assignment from your teacher.

No matter what state you live in, you can still ask your school to offer non-animal alternatives to dissection. You and your friends can contact the [Ethical Science and Education Coalition \(ESEC\)](#).

### What can you do if your class requires dissection and you do not want to participate?

**Make Your Objection Early!** Find out as early as possible if a class will involve dissection or any other use of an animal. Talk to your parents or guardians about your concerns. Once you have the support of your parents and guardians, schedule a meeting with your teacher.

**Seek Support.** When you meet with your teacher, be very calm, polite and bring something in writing prepared by you and your parents or guardians explaining your concerns. It might be helpful to meet your teacher along with other students who share the same concern. So ask your classmates and stick up for what you believe in!

**Be Prepared.** To prepare for the meeting with your teacher, you can borrow an alternative lesson from one of groups listed below. Any one of these groups will help you choose an alternative to show your teacher that you can still learn about animals using a non-animal alternative.

[HSUS: Dissection Campaign Packet](#)

Free packet for high school students and younger.

[National Anti-Vivisection Society \(NAVS\) Hotline](#)

The nation's only toll-free service (1-800-922-FROG) providing information, counseling and support for students, parents and teachers who object to dissection.

**Ask Your Teacher Lots of Questions.** Find out what your teacher wants you to learn from the exercise or dissection. Be non-confrontational and make sure you let your teacher know that you are interested in learning the material. By working together, you and your teacher might come to a conclusion that will allow you to meet the goal of the exercise without dissecting.

**Talk to your Principal.** If your teacher is not willing to discuss non-animal choices with you, you may have to take your request to your school principal.

**For More Information**

Visit [ASPCA Humane Education](#) online.

**More information on computer-generated and photographed online dissections:**

- [Froguits: Virtual Dissection Software](#)
- [Virtual Frog Dissection Kit](#)
- [Virtual Pig Dissection](#)
- [Virtual Worm Tour](#)
- [Starfish Dissection](#)
- [Grasshopper Anatomy](#)

**More information on alternatives to animal dissection and projects:**

- [Dissection Alternative](#)
- [Ethical Science & Education Coalition](#)
- [The National Anti-Vivisection Society](#)

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