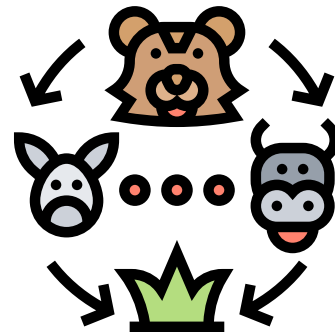


Food Chains



Follow energy as it flows through an ecosystem from the Sun to the top of the food chain!

Background

Every living thing plays a role in an ecosystem. There are many ways to define that role, but one of the most important, is to define where that living thing gets its energy or food.

It starts with the Sun

In just about every ecosystem on Earth, the source of energy starts with the sun.



There are Levels to this

Each living thing receives energy or eats in different ways. Where that living thing gets its food determines where on the food chain it is. Each link on the chain is a “stop” on the food chain. Those stops are called **Trophic Levels**.

Producers

Plants and algae are called **Producers** because they produce their own food from the sun’s energy. They catch the sun’s energy in their leaves and use that energy to make sugar which they use as food. This process is called **Photosynthesis**.

About This Activity

Grades: **3rd and up**

Activity Level: **Medium**

Materials: **Clipboards, Writing Utensils, Food Chain Search Pages, (optional) Make a Food Chain Cards for practicing food chains.**

Consumers

Animals are living things that eat other living things for their energy. As such, animals are **Consumers**.

Consumers are further divided into their own tiers based on what living things they eat.

Types of Consumers

Consumers that eat Producers are known as **Primary Consumers**. We also call them herbivores.

Consumers that eat Primary Consumers or Producers, are known as **Secondary Consumers**.

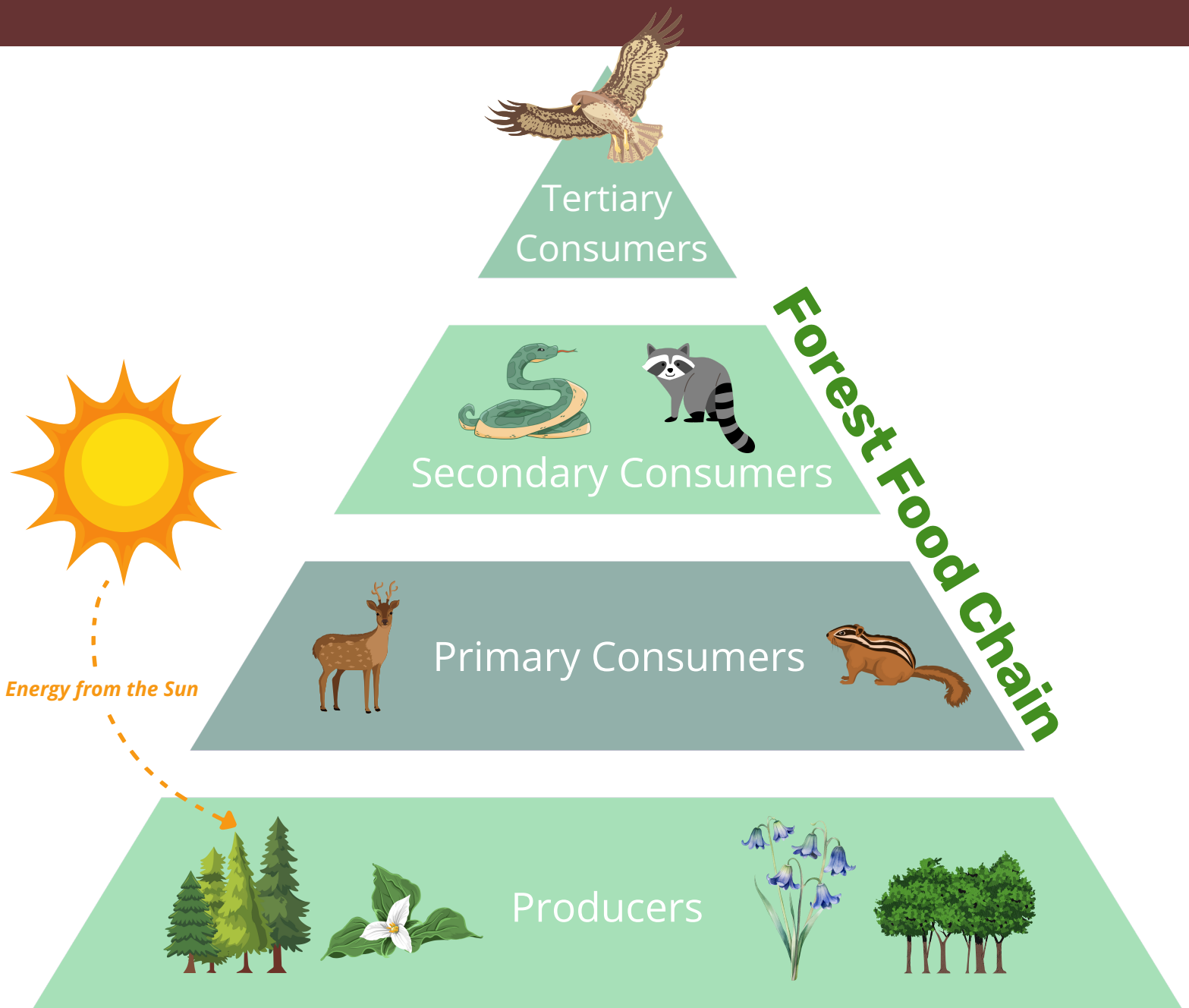
Finally, Consumers that eat Primary or Secondary Consumers are known as **Tertiary Consumers**. These animals are the top of the food chain.

For nearly 30 years, Imago has been leading students outside to study and learn from the natural world. Imago's Branching Out program leads outdoor education at schools, builds and supports outdoor learning stations and provides teacher resources for outdoor learning. Contact Imago for information on how we can help you get your students learning in nature.



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Food Chains



Trophic Levels in an ecosystem are often represented as a pyramid. The bottom of the pyramid, the producers, are more plentiful. As energy moves up, there is less energy available to the next level meaning there are fewer of that living thing when compared to the level below.

The final step in the chain is death. When a living thing dies, it decomposes and the nutrients return to the ecosystem for other living things to use.

FOOD CHAIN SEARCH

Head outside to collect real life data that you can use to make your own food chain. List each type of producer or consumer that you find using the table below:

Producers	
Primary Consumers	
Secondary Consumers	
Teritary Consumers <i>they can be tough to find, so you can also write in what tertiary consumers live in your area</i>	

FOOD CHAIN SEARCH

Based on the data you collected, create a food chain the things you found

PRODUCER



PRIMARY CONSUMER



SECONDARY CONSUMER

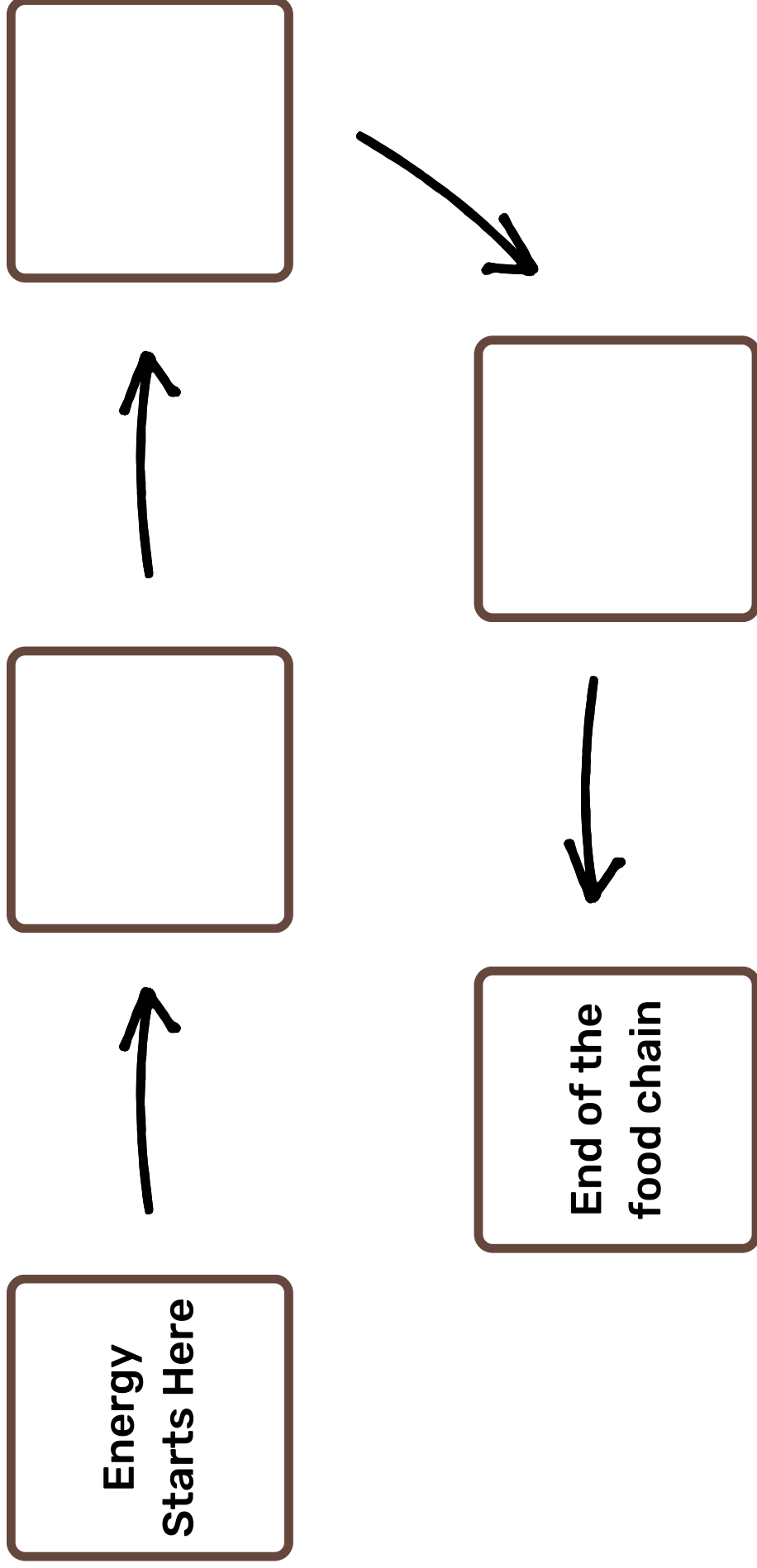


TERTIARY CONSUMER



Make a Food Chain

Use the cards to make a forest, a meadow and a desert food chain!



Food Chain Cards

Cut out the cards and challenge you students to make three different food chains!

