

# 7.4.1 Trophic levels

## AQA GCSE Biology (Higher) Question and answer notes

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### How to use these notes

These notes cover everything you need to know for this part of the specification. They have been written in question-answer format to make them easier for you to study from.

In order to study successfully, I recommend you do the following for each question and answer:

- Read it carefully and make sure you **understand** it.
- **Memorise** the answer.
- **Practice** applying your understanding to past exam questions.

A good way to memorise information is to use **retrieval practice**. This is when you practise retrieving information from your memory. You could do this by making a flashcard for each question with the question on one side and the answer on the other. Or you could use a flashcard app. Alternatively, use a sheet of paper to cover up the answer so you can only see the question. Try to answer the question and then check how you did.

You should practise retrieving each answer from your memory until you can do it perfectly. Even once you can retrieve the answer perfectly, your ability to retrieve it will probably fade as time passes without practising. Therefore you will need to keep going back to the questions that you have previously mastered and practising them again. However, each time you re-learn the answer, the memory will be stronger and will last longer than the time before.

### What is a trophic level?

A trophic level is an organism's position within its food chain.

### What are the most common trophic levels?

The most common trophic levels are

- Producer
- Primary consumer
- Secondary consumer
- Tertiary consumer

**What is a producer?**

A producer is an organism that produces food through the process of photosynthesis.

**What are some examples of producers?**

Examples of producers include plants and algae.

**What is a consumer?**

A consumer is an organism that obtains food by eating other organisms.

**What is a primary consumer?**

A primary consumer is an organism that eats a producer.

**What is a secondary consumer?**

A secondary consumer is an organism that eats a primary consumer.

**What is a tertiary consumer?**

A tertiary consumer is an organism that eats a secondary consumer.

**What is a herbivore?**

A herbivore is an animal that only eats plants and/or algae.

**What is the trophic level of a herbivore?**

A herbivore is a primary consumer.

**What is a carnivore?**

A carnivore is an animal that eats other animals.

**What is the trophic level of a carnivore?**

The trophic level of a carnivore depends on what kinds of animals it eats. If it eats herbivores then it is a secondary consumer. If it eats other carnivores then it is a tertiary consumer.

**What is a predator?**

A predator is an animal that kills and eats other animals.

**What is an apex predator?**

An apex predator is a predator that does not have any predators of its own. In other words, it is an animal that is at the top of its food chain.

**What is a decomposer?**

A decomposer is an organism that breaks down dead organisms and other dead matter (e.g. faeces). Decomposers are often bacteria or fungi.

**How do decomposers gain food?**

Decomposers gain food from dead organisms or other dead matter. They secrete digestive enzymes on the dead matter. The enzymes break down large food molecules into small ones. The decomposers then absorb these small food molecules through the process of diffusion.