

PROTIST JUNIOR

Protists are very small organisms, generally made up of just one cell, that have to take care of all the activities required to live: feeding, movement and reproduction. Protists include micro-organisms with very different shapes, structures and lifestyles.

All protists can reproduce “asexually”, that is, they can duplicate without exchanging genetic material. This is the method most frequently used to increase the number of individuals. In some cases, they can reproduce “sexually” through processes that recombine their genetic material.

All protists need oxygen to survive. They can be divided into two big groups: autotrophs and heterotrophs.

Autotrophic protists are capable of photosynthesising and are mainly represented by unicellular algae. They are subdivided into different groups according to the shape of the cell and the type of photosynthetic pigment they utilise: **golden algae, dinoflagellates** and **euglenids**.

Heterotrophic protists are also called protozoans. Some of these protists are predators and feed on bacteria and other protists, others obtain food from dead organic matter, and others are parasites that exploit the resources of different organisms.

According to how they move, protists can be subdivided into four main groups: **amoeboid, flagellated, sporozoan and ciliated protozoans**.