

# DICHOTOMOUS KEY RULES

## Some Key Ideas in Dichotomous Key Construction

1. Use **definitive** characteristics to categorize your organism. Remember, it's THIS or NOT THIS.
2. Use characteristics which can be directly observed.
3. DO NOT use vague terms such as "big" and "small."
4. Remember, each question you ask will separate your organisms into TWO categories. (This or NOT this.) \*\*Remember our office supply example from class. We started with Pink or NOT Pink.
5. When creating your key, your dichotomous questions should equal one less than the organisms you're classifying. For example, if you are classifying 5 organisms, your key should have 4 questions, with 2 (dichotomous) answers (a & b).