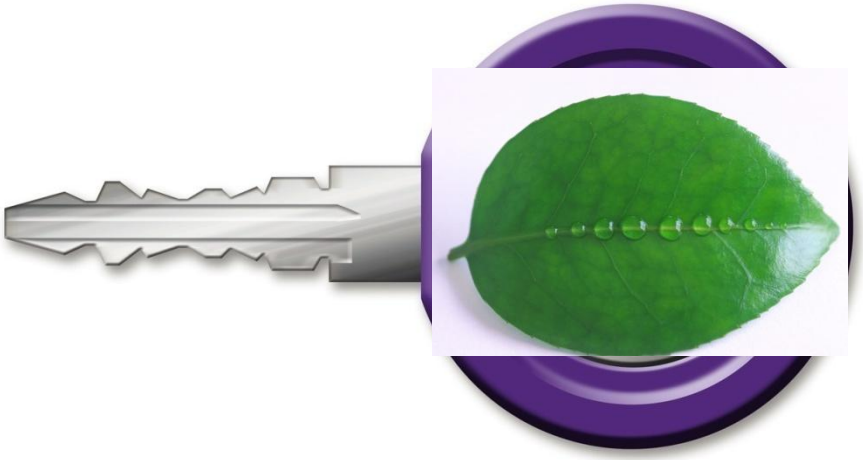
Keys

Construction & Use of Keys

- Keys are just that… a key that opens doors to the identities of plants
- Also can be considered maps leading to a destination: the identity of an unknown plant



Construction & Use of Keys

- Series of paired, mutually exclusive statements
- Divides a set of objects or classes
- Progressively smaller subsets
- Each subset has one and only one object or kind of object

Dichotomous Key

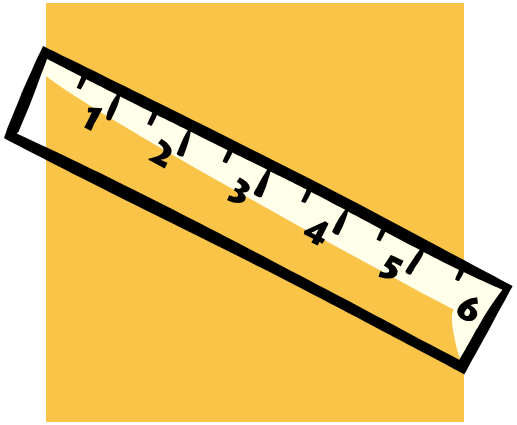
- Bracketed or bracket key
- Indented key
- Presents two choices = couplets
- Lead to another couplet
- And so on
- Reach the name of the plant

Rules for the Construction of Keys

- Begin each statement with a capital letter and end with a period
- Begin each statement with the subject
- Noun (what you want the reader look at)
- Avoid the use of the word “not”
- Use “absent: instead of “not pres
- Use “without” instead of “not pubescent”

Rules for the Construction of Keys

- Use measurements instead of “large,” “small,” “short”
- The verb, which is always a form of “to be,” is omitted
- The predicate consists of one or more adjectives or other modifiers that describe the subject
- Predicates describe alternate, non-overlapping conditions of the subject



Example of a Bracketed Key

1. Shaft of fastener with spiral grooves. ……2
1. Shaft of fastener smooth. ……3

2. (1). Tip of shaft pointed. ……screw
2. Tip of shaft blunt. ……bolt

3(1). Head cylindrical, nearly as tall as wide. …. …finishing nail

3. Head flat, much wider than thick. …….4

4.(3). Shaft 1 inch or more long. ……nail

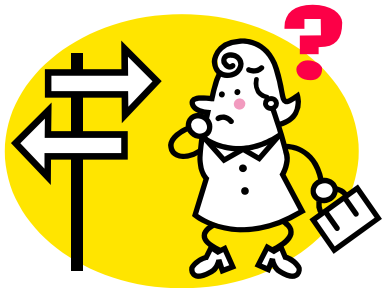
4. Shaft less than ½ inch long. ……tack

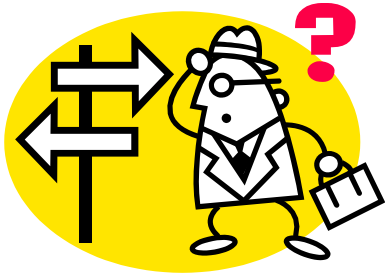
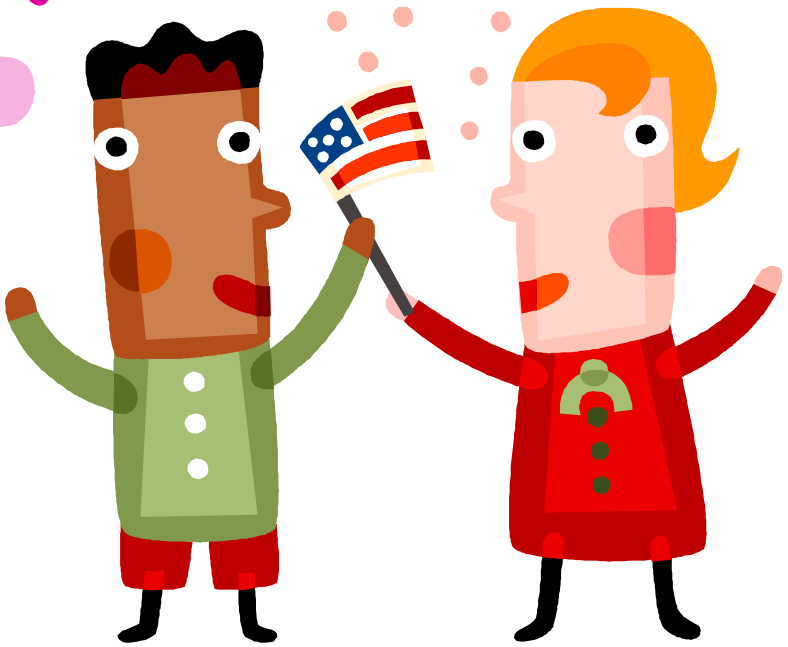
Guidelines for Using Keys

- Always read both parts of the couplet
- Make sure you understand the meaning of the terms used. **DO NOT GUESS!!!**
- Where minute objects are concerned, use a lens of sufficient magnifying power to clearly see the feature you need to see.
- DO NOT base your conclusion on a single observation of a plant part.

Guidelines for Using Keys

- If the choice of division is not clear, try both divisions
  - You will reach two different answers
  - Read the descriptions of each to make a choice
- After having arrived at an answer in a key, **DO NOT** accept it as the one true answer
  - Check the plant's description to see if it matches your plant





HAVE FUN!