

How to Make the Switch to Humane Dissection Alternatives

Step 1: Establish where you stand

Knowing your school's stance on dissection can help you identify useful talking points.

- Is dissection explicitly mentioned as a required part of your curriculum?
- Does your school already give students the option to opt-out of dissection if they choose?
- Does your school already have preferred dissection alternatives available for students who request them?

Step 2: Build Support

Colleagues: Ask your colleagues if they have considered using dissection alternatives before. Along with gaining insight this might reveal who will stand with you (or against you) when you make your case.

Students: Students can be helpful allies. Talk to them about your interest in using alternatives. A NAVS student survey indicated half of students had either no opinion regarding alternatives or expressed a preference for using alternatives.

Step 3: Make your case

Know your student's rights: Depending on where you teach, your students may have the right to access dissection alternatives, which could bolster your argument for switching to humane alternatives. Visit navs.org to explore students' rights laws and policy. You can also check out your school district website or policy manual for information about dissection requirements.

Know the benefits of dissection alternatives:

- No harmful chemical preservatives: specimen preservation formalin produces a noxious smell and can cause irritation to the eyes, nose and throat.
- Environmentally friendly: The collection of frog specimens for dissection has collapsed ecosystems in some areas around the US and Canada. Alternatives are eco-friendly and often reusable.
- High student engagement: Alternatives are realistic without the "ick" factor.

Dispel common concerns: Be prepared to address common concerns surrounding dissection alternatives.

COST	A variety of dissection alternatives exist, many of which are less expensive than animal specimens because they do not need to be re-purchased every year.
EFFICACY	A peer-reviewed analysis revealed that 60% of articles that compared student learning outcomes with traditional animal specimens and humane alternatives for activities including dissection showed there was no real difference in the student learning experience; 30% of articles concluded that alternatives provided a better experience for students.
EXPERIENCE	Many top performing nations in medicine and science, including the Netherlands, Denmark, India and Switzerland, have completely done away with dissection in schools.
HANDS-ON OPPORTUNITY	Dissection alternatives take many different forms, some of which include physical models that can be cut open using a scalpel, just like a real specimen.
CURRICULUM	Most public schools follow the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) framework, which does not reference dissection as a necessary learning tool. It is rare for dissection to be mentioned in state science standards for K-12 students.

Don't get discouraged! If you have exhausted all these avenues, contact us at bioleap@navs.org and we will do our best to help you make the switch to humane dissection alternatives in your classroom.

Learn more about humane options to dissection at bioleap.org