


Thinking about Concepts

- Let's consider how we develop **ideas** or **concepts**. We'll start with a simple example.
- What are some of the properties, or distinctive things, about a fruit?
- Answers: skin, grows on trees, seeds, juice, sweet taste, coloured, we eat them.
- Is there any fruit that DOESN'T have any of these properties? Let's cross them off our list. Lemon is not sweet, pineapples/grapes don't grow on trees, some grapes don't have seeds.
- All of the properties left are **common to all** examples of fruit. We call this our **generalisation** or **concept** or mental picture of **all fruits**.
- If we had to describe a fruit to a man from Mars, this would be our generalisation or picture for him, as it is true for **all fruit**!
- Here is another example of a **concept**.

Example

Thing	Properties
a bird	nest, lays eggs, two legs, feathers, tail, chirps, head, no teeth



Generalising

- In the previous page, we looked at how we make up a generalisation or general concept of something. Now let's develop this further.
- Think of all the birds you have seen in books or in real life.
- Do they have anything in common? It depends on how many you have seen. However, somewhere in your brain you have a picture of a bird with feathers, a beak, eggs, a nest, flying, and so on. This is your generalisation about or concept of a bird.
- Why do we generalise? Well, it is like a template or model to guide our thinking. It helps us to recognise new examples of birds. And it helps us to predict what a new bird that we observe might be able to do.
- As well as birds, you also have mental pictures of cars, chairs, triangles, and many other things. Following are examples using 'fruit' as the concept.

Examples

Some Properties				
Fruit	coloured skin	grows on trees	sweet taste	seeds
apples	yes	yes	yes	yes
lemons	yes	yes	no	yes
strawberries	yes	no	yes	yes
bananas	yes	yes	yes	yes
passion fruit	yes	no	yes	yes
Generalisation: fruit are generally coloured, and have skin and seeds.				