

A dichotomous key is a tool that allows the user to determine the identity of items in the natural world, such as trees, wildflowers, mammals, reptiles, rocks, and fish. Keys consist of a series of "either or" choices that lead the user to the correct name of a given item. "Dichotomous" means "divided into two parts". **Therefore, dichotomous keys always give two choices in each step.**

Barbels are whisker like sensors near the mouth

Classification Key for Common Freshwater Fish of New York State			
1)	A	Body noticeably covered with scales	Go to 2
	B	Scales not covering body or too small to be seen	Go to 12
2)	A	Dorsal fin single	Go to 3
	B	Dorsal fins two or more, joined or separated	Go to 6
3)	A	Body more than four times as long as broad (top to bottom): front edge of dorsal fin far back on body; mouth large, hinge back of eye	Go to 4
	B	Body less than four times as long as broad: front edge of dorsal fin about midway between head and tail; mouth not large, hinge in front of eye	Go to 5
4)	A	Dark lines forming netted design on body: fins not spotted	Pickereel
	B	Body covered with yellow spots; fins spotted	Northern Pike
5)	A	Mouth turned downward: barbels absent; dorsal fin not elongated	White Sucker
	B	Mouth not turned downward: barbels present; dorsal fin elongated	Common Carp
6)	A	Two dorsal fins separated, the anterior spiny and the posterior soft	Go to 7
	B	Two dorsal fins united, forming an anterior spiny portion and a posterior soft portion	Go to 8
7)	A	Top of head concave, forming a hump in front of dorsal fin; dark vertical bars on body	Yellow Perch
	B	Top of head not concave, body sloping to dorsal fin and not forming a hump; dark blotches on body	Walleye
8)	A	Body more than three times as long as broad	Go to 9
	B	Body less than three times as long as broad	Go to 10
9)	A	Hinge of jaws behind the eye	Largemouth Bass
	B	Hinge of jaws below the eye	Smallmouth Bass
10)	A	Mouth large, hinge below eye; sides flecked with dark spots	Rock Bass
	B	Mouth small, hinge in front of eye	Go to 11
11)	A	Pectoral and pelvic fins sharply pointed; few or no stripes on face	Bluegill
	B	Pectoral and pelvic fins rounded; stripes on face	Pumpkinseed
12)	A	Body much elongated and snakelike: dorsal, caudal, and anal fins continuous	American Eel
	B	Body not elongated and snakelike: dorsal, caudal, and anal fins separate; adipose fin present	Go to 13
13)	A	Barbels growing from lips and top of head; head large and broad	Go to 14
	B	Barbels lacking; head not large and broad	Go to 16
14)	A	Caudal fin deeply forked; head tapering	Go to 15
	B	Caudal fin rounded or slightly indented but not forked: head blunt	Bullhead
15)	A	Dorsal fin rounded at top: body silvery, speckled with black markings	Channel Catfish
	B	Dorsal fin long and pointed at top: body bluish-gray without speckles	Blue Catfish
16)	A	Caudal fin forked: back with distinct dark spots	Atlantic Salmon
	B	Caudal fin square or slightly indented; back mottled or spotted	Go to 17
17)	A	Back and caudal fin spotted: broad horizontal band along sides	Rainbow Trout
	B	Back mottled with dark lines: caudal fin not spotted; fins edged with white	Brook Trout



Fish Name: _____



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