Classifying corals using a dichotomous key
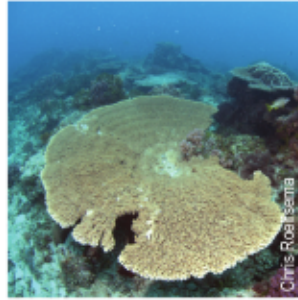
Group A

Massive / Boulder	Plate	Branching	Soft
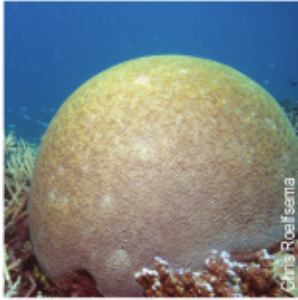
Platygyra daedalea.

Acropora.

Acropora.

Gorgonïidae.

Group B

Free living	Digitate	Encrusting	Foliaceous
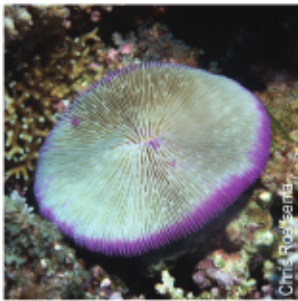
Fungïidae.

Acropora.
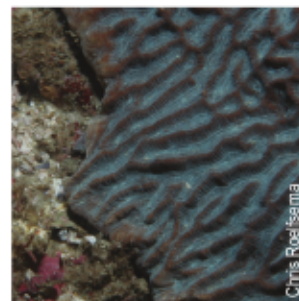
Goniastrea.

Turbinaria.

Questions

1. Develop a table of observable features for the corals in Group A.
2. Look at the completed table and rank the columns from highest number of dots to the lowest.
3. Now produce a tree diagram or dichotomous key as was undertaken in Worksheet C1.
4. Now apply the dichotomous key to the corals in Group B. Does this system work for all of these corals? List the characters that might also need to be added to your key to help distinguish between coral species visually?
5. In the classroom, discuss and explore any differences about the observable characters of the corals in group B or while in the field compared to when you initially developed the key in the classroom. With a greater understanding of the coral shapes and forms, would you produce a different key? As a group consolidate these ideas to produce a more accurate key based on your greater knowledge.
6. Write five to seven sentences outlining the reason why dichotomous keys might change and also whether an organism you are keying out is always going to fit into the key you have. If you think it will not, explain why?

CORALWATCH