**ACTIVITY: Cancer definitions**

**Activity idea**

In this activity, students define four key cancer terms. The aim is to produce accurate definitions identifiable by their peers.

By the end of this activity, students should be able to:

* define the terms ‘tumour’, ‘malignant’, ‘benign’ and ‘cancer’
* use the terms accurately within cancer-related discussions.

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**Introduction/background**

Scientific language is critical for science. Scientific knowledge is communicated through its text and associated symbols, diagrams, graphs and equations. The specialised language of science makes it possible for scientists to communicate ideas and explanations in a way that would not be possible with everyday language.

This activity helps students understand the importance of accuracy when defining scientific terms. The aim is for students to produce an accurate definition that is identifiable and understandable by their peers.

**What you need**

* Access to the article [What is cancer?](https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/989-what-is-cancer)
* Copies of the student worksheet: [Cancer definitions](#handout)

**What to do**

1. Before class, cut the student handout into separate sections.
2. Ask students to read through the article [What is cancer?](https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/989-what-is-cancer)
3. Put students into groups of four. Each student receives one of the words from the handout – tumour, malignant, benign, cancer.
4. Each student writes down a definition for their word and then folds the word under before handing it on to the next person in their group.
5. The next student reads the definition, writes down the word they think it defines and folds under the definition before handing it along.
6. This continues until the end when the students open up their handout strip to see if the word at the start matches the word at the end.
7. Discuss the results with the students. Compare the successful definitions with the ‘unsuccessful’ definitions that changed during the activity.
8. Refer to students to the article [What is cancer?](https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/resources/989-what-is-cancer) to see how their definitions compare.

**Extension ideas**

* To determine whether students have the correct understanding of these terms, ask students to write a short, fictional medical report. The report is for an overseas visitor who has fallen ill while visiting New Zealand. The visitor has limited English. Students must include and explain all four terms (tumour, malignant, benign, cancer) as part of the report.
* Watch the videos [Cells and cancer](https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/videos/527-cells-and-cancer) and [Why do good cells go bad?](https://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/videos/528-why-do-good-cells-go-bad) to learn more about how tumours develop and how cancer cells differ in appearance and behaviour from other cells.

**Student handout: Cancer definitions**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Word** | Student 1 | Student 2 | Student 3 | Student 4 |
| **Definition** | **Word** | **Definition** | **Word** |
| Tumour |  |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Word** | Student 1 | Student 2 | Student 3 | Student 4 |
| **Definition** | **Word** | **Definition** | **Word** |
| Malignant |  |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Word** | Student 1 | Student 2 | Student 3 | Student 4 |
| **Definition** | **Word** | **Definition** | **Word** |
| Benign |  |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Word** | Student 1 | Student 2 | Student 3 | Student 4 |
| **Definition** | **Word** | **Definition** | **Word** |
| Cancer |  |  |  |  |