The Cell

Cells are the basic building blocks of all forms of life. The human eye can only see objects that are larger than 0.1 mm. There are many living things all around you that are too small for you to see.

The First Microscope

The first microscope was invented by a Dutch linen merchant named Anton Van Leeuwenhook. His microscope had one lens and could magnify up to 300x. He used his microscope to study blood, pond water, and matter scraped from his teeth. He observed single cell organisms. He called these one cell organisms “animalcules”. He wrote about his discoveries in 1674.

Microscopes Today

We use compound light microscopes in school. Compound light microscopes have 2 lenses, which can magnify objects up to 2000x.

Scientists use electron microscopes. These use beams of electrons bounced off the sample, then enlarged to form an image on a screen. Depending on the microscope, they can magnify 4000x to 7000x.