

Inheritance

Chimpanzees are set apart from all other organisms because their parents were chimpanzees and their offspring will also be chimpanzees. We often talk about people inheriting certain characteristics. 'Daisy has inherited his father's curly hair', or 'Freda has inherited her mothers brown eyes'. We expect tall parents to have tall children. The inheritance of such characteristics is called heredity and the branch of biology that studies how heredity works is called genetics.

The study of genetics attempts to explain this process of heredity and it also plays a very significant role in the modern world, from plant and animal breeding to human health and disease.



Key definition

Inheritance is the transmission of genetic information from one generation to the next, leading to continuity of the species and variation within it.