



## Quadrat: User-placement sampling method

**Where you are:** Freshwater, coastal, and upland ecosystems  
**What you're looking for:** Plants, slow-moving animals, sessile animals  
**What you need:** One 1m<sup>2</sup> quadrat per individual or team  
**Note:** Quadrats are simple to make yourself. Instructions are available on the *Vital Signs* website.

1. Find a place that looks interesting to you, or a place you are curious about.
2. Lay your 1m<sup>2</sup> quadrat down.
3. Search the entire square meter for the plant or animal you are looking for.
4. Use your *Vital Signs* species cards to determine whether you think you found, or think you did not find the species you are looking for. Support your claims with written and photo evidence.

**Note:** It is easy to confuse this sampling method with the Quadrat: Randomized-placement sampling method. Please don't. They both use a 1m<sup>2</sup> quadrat, but otherwise have very little in common. The Randomized-placement method involves using a transect line, random numbers, and placing the quadrat in a very precise location.

**Why use a quadrat?** User-placed quadrats are a simple sampling tool that can be used to focus your attention in one specific area. Limiting the area in which you look for a species tends to help you look more closely for it. It also helps scientists and others who use your data better understand how much of the area you studied.

Quadrats are also useful tools for "scaling up" to understand more about a larger area. Think of a quadrat as 1 piece of cake. If you eat that piece of cake, you have a pretty good idea of what the rest of the cake tastes like. Similarly, if you sample a 1m<sup>2</sup> slice of your study area, you have an idea of the type and abundance of species that live in the surrounding area. Understand, though, that when scaling up you are making big assumptions about the overall uniformity of an area.