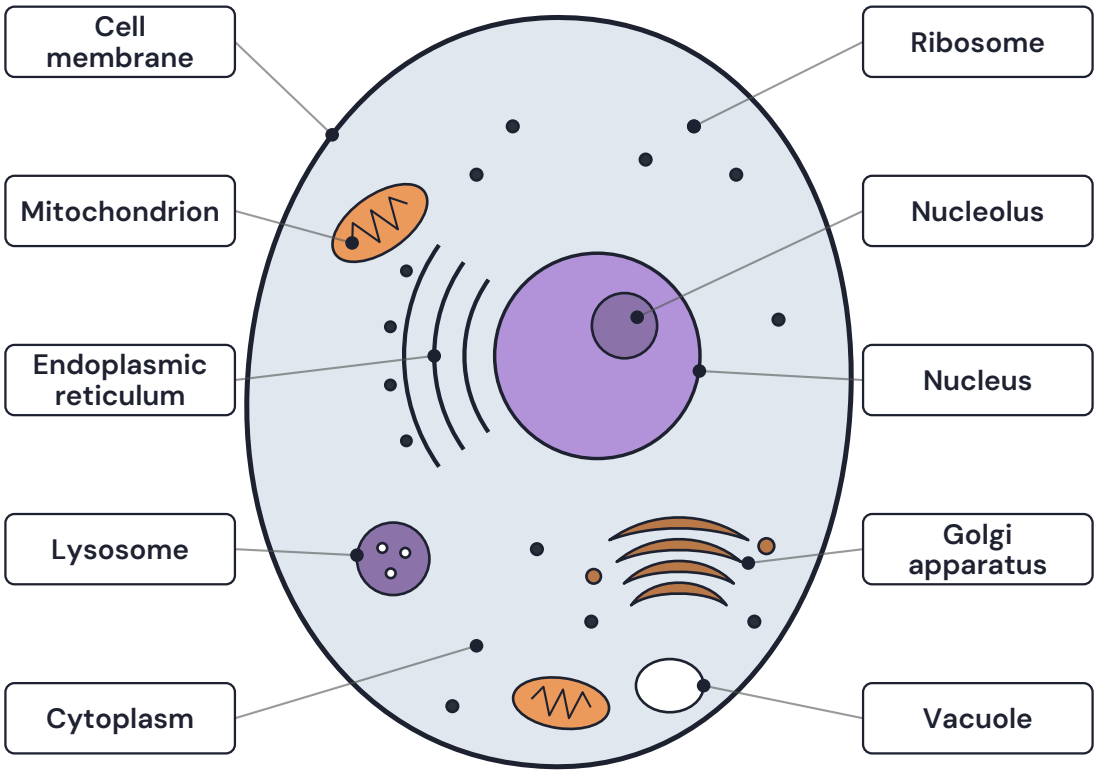
Parts of an animal cell

An animal cell, cut open to show the parts inside it.



Cell membrane
The thin outer layer around the cell. It lets materials in and out.

Mitochondrion
Turns the energy in food into a form the cell can use.

Endoplasmic reticulum
Helps process the molecules the cell makes and carries them where they need to go.

Lysosome
The recycling center. It breaks down worn-out cell parts and bacteria that get in.

Cytoplasm
The jelly-like fluid that fills the cell. The other parts float in it.

Ribosome
A tiny part that makes proteins. Some float free; some sit on the endoplasmic reticulum.

Nucleolus
A round part inside the nucleus. It makes the cell's ribosomes.

Nucleus
The command center. It holds the DNA, inside a membrane of its own.

Golgi apparatus
Packages molecules from the endoplasmic reticulum to be sent out of the cell.

Vacuole
A sac that holds waste. An animal cell's vacuoles are small.

A plant cell also has a stiff cell wall, and its vacuole is much larger. The cells in leaves and stems also hold chloroplasts.

From MedlinePlus Genetics, the National Human Genome Research Institute and NC State Extension. Not to scale.