**Watch:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK7Ckmxxqds>

**What are Protists?**

**Protists** are eukaryotes, and most are single-celled. You can think about protists as all eukaryotic organisms that are neither animals, nor plants, nor fungi.

Even among themselves, they have very little in common. Although theses organisms were put in the category *Protista* by Ernst Haeckel in 1866, the Kingdom Protista was not an accepted classification in the scientific world until the 1960s. These unique organisms can be so different from each other that sometimes Protista is called the “junk drawer kingdom.” This kingdom contains the eukaryotes that cannot be put into any other kingdom.

**Unicellular or Multicellular?**

Most protists, such as the ones shown in **Figure** [below](https://www.ck12.org/book/CK-12-Life-Science-For-Middle-School/r7/section/9.1/#x-ck12-TVNMUy0wOS0wMS1wcm90aXN0LXNoYXBlcw..), are so small that they can be seen only with a microscope. Protists are mostly unicellular (one-celled) eukaryotes that exist as independent cells. A few protists are multicellular (many-celled) and surprisingly large. These protists do not, however, show cellular specialization or differentiation into tissues. For example, kelp is a multicellular protist and can be over 100-meters long with cells that perform mostly the same jobs.

**Characteristics of Protists**

A few characteristics are common between protists:

1. They are eukaryotic, which means they have a nucleus.
2. Most have mitochondria.
3. They can be parasites.
4. They all prefer aquatic or moist environments.

For classification, the protists are divided into three groups:

1. Animal-like protists
2. Plant-like protists
3. Fungi-like protists.

**But remember, protists are not animals, nor plants, nor fungi.**