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Research and References

4.3 d 4.6 b

Sometimes you want to know more about something you read. The topic could be anything: a person, or a place, or a time in history, for example. Or you might need to learn what a word means or to find another word that means the same thing. Looking for more information on a topic is called **research**.

Sources of information are called **references**. There are many kinds of references. They hold different kinds of information, and they present it in different ways. That’s why knowing *where* to go to find the information you want is an important research skill.

Solve **Research** is *what you do* to find more information. **References** are *where you go* to find that information.

Some references help you look up *words*. They usually list words in alphabetical order. So you need to know how to spell a word to look it up.

- A **dictionary** tells you what a word means and how to pronounce the word. It also tells you whether a word is a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb.
- A **glossary** is like a small dictionary. It is usually at the back of a book. It tells you the meaning of important words in that book.
- A **thesaurus** tells you words that mean the *same* as another word, or **synonyms**. It also tells you words that mean the *opposite* of a word, or **antonyms**.

Example

Look at this dictionary entry for the word state.

state (stāt) *n.* **1.** condition of being. **2.** condition of mind or feeling. **3.** an organized political group or area. **4.** high rank or greatness.

Which meaning of the word state is used in the first paragraph of “Mountain Lions”?

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|------------------|------------------|
| (A) Definition 1 | (C) Definition 3 |
| (B) Definition 2 | (D) Definition 4 |

D I S C U S S	<p>(A) Use <u>condition of being</u> instead of <u>state</u> in the sentence. It doesn’t seem to make sense. This choice is not correct.</p> <p>(B) A <u>condition of mind or feeling</u> doesn’t fit into the sentence, either.</p>	<p>(C) This definition makes sense. The article talks about a <u>state</u> that is part of a country.</p> <p>(D) Again, <u>high rank or greatness</u> used instead of <u>state</u> doesn’t make any sense.</p>
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Some references help you look up *people, places, things, or ideas*:

- An **encyclopedia** has short articles about many topics. It may be general or it may cover a specific subject, such as medicine.
- An **almanac** is a book of useful facts and statistics. It is usually updated every year. There are almanacs for different topics, such as places, populations, sports, or actors.
- An **atlas** is a collection of maps. It helps you locate places. It may tell you current populations, too.
- An **index** is a list of the topics in a book, with the page numbers where they are discussed. The index is at the end of the book. It is in alphabetical order.
- **Magazine articles** and **books** give detailed information on almost anything. Use them when you need to know a lot about your subject.
- **Websites** give detailed information about almost everything, too. Use a search engine and type in key words about your topic.

Ask How **reliable** is your reference? Not every reference is written by an expert—anyone can publish a website or a pamphlet. How **current** is the reference? An almanac from 1999 will not tell you the population of Virginia’s cities now.

Example

If the author of “Mountain Lions” wanted to find out more about the Florida Panther, which of these resources would be MOST helpful?

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|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| (A) A book on African lions | (C) An atlas |
| (B) An almanac of Florida cities | (D) An Internet search |

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- (A) A book on African lions would probably not be helpful, because Florida Panthers are not the same animals.
- (B) An almanac about Florida’s cities would focus on cities. That is not where the Florida Panther lives, so it would probably not be helpful.

- (C) An atlas would have maps. It would show *where* Florida is. But it wouldn’t tell about the Florida Panther.
- (D) An Internet search would probably find websites that have detailed information about the Florida Panther. This is the best choice.



Connections What information would you like to see added to the section of “Mountain Lions” entitled “Saving the Cats”? What reference might give you this information?