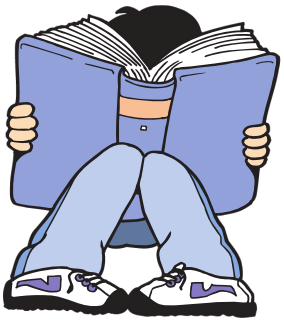
Unit 2: Reading—Understanding What You Read

Overview



The better you read, the better you will do in all of your classes, not only in English.

By now, you have probably discovered how important reading is for all of your classes. The better you read, the better you will do in all of your classes, not only in English. You also have probably discovered that the better you read or understand something, the more interested you are in an assignment. And the more interested you are in a reading assignment, the better you will do in the class.

Good readers not only understand what they read, they also have learned to read critically. When you read critically, you apply reason to what you read; you judge what is valid and what is not. Too often we think that published information is true simply because it is in a book, newspaper, or magazine. Critical readers remember the saying: *Don't believe everything you read!* Some things are facts, whereas others are opinions. Some things are opinions disguised as facts. Critical readers evaluate what they read so they can make informed choices about what to accept and what to reject.

Not everything you *read* contains words, however. In this unit you will also practice reading *visual references* such as signs, tables, and graphs. You have been doing this kind of reading most of your life. Nobody, for example, has to tell you what the sign for a men's or women's bathroom looks like!

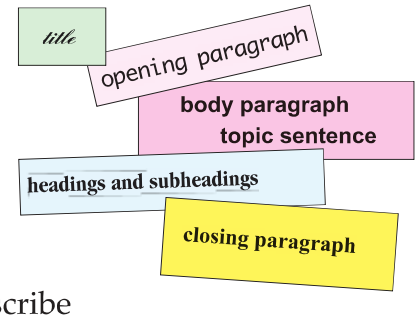
Few skills are as important to a student as reading. Fortunately, no matter what level of reader you are now, you can improve your reading skills. This unit is designed to do just that. Specific areas of focus include the following:

- previewing your reading materials
- using context for clues to word meaning
- using word parts for clues to meaning

- finding the main idea of a reading selection
- understanding a writer's use of language
- recognizing fact and opinion
- understanding visual references
- finding information from different sources
- summarizing a reading selection.

Previewing: Preparing to Read

Most of the texts you read are organized in similar ways. They all have, for example, a title. They all have an opening **paragraph** and a closing *paragraph*. The paragraphs in between are called **body paragraphs**. All of these paragraphs have a **topic sentence**. The *topic sentence* states the **main idea** of the paragraph—the point the rest of the paragraph hopes to make. Many texts also have headings and subheadings. These divide the text into sections and describe briefly the contents of each section. Knowing this organization is helpful because it can guide you through a **preview**.



Good readers usually preview their materials before they begin to read.

Good readers usually *preview* their materials before they begin to read. Previewing helps you discover the writer's purpose and prepares you to understand what you are going to read. Previewing helps you organize and interpret information right from the start, so you read more efficiently.

Complete the steps on the following page as you preview your reading materials. Answer the corresponding questions as you work.

Guide to Previewing Reading Materials

1. **Read the title.**
    - What is the *general subject* of the material?
    - On what *specific part* of the general subject will the material focus?
    - Does the title tell you how the *author feels* about the subject?
2. **Skim through the selection.**
    - Look for chapter titles, headings, and subheadings.
    - How is the material divided? If it is a book, skim the **table of contents** for chapter titles. If it is a chapter or article, skim for headings and subheadings.
    - What do these divisions tell us about the content of the article? Think of them as the bones or skeleton of the material. As you read, lay the information and ideas where they belong on the skeleton.
3. **Look at the illustrations.**
    - If illustrations appear, what do they tell you about the subject?
4. **Read the opening paragraph.**
    - How does the author feel about the subject?
    - Is he or she presenting an *explanation* or making an *argument*? Look for a **thesis statement**.
5. **Read the first sentence of each body paragraph, looking for the topic or focus of each paragraph.**
    - What is the *topic* or focus of each paragraph? Look for a single word or phrase that tells the topic.
6. **Read the closing paragraph.**
    - What conclusions does the author draw about the subject?

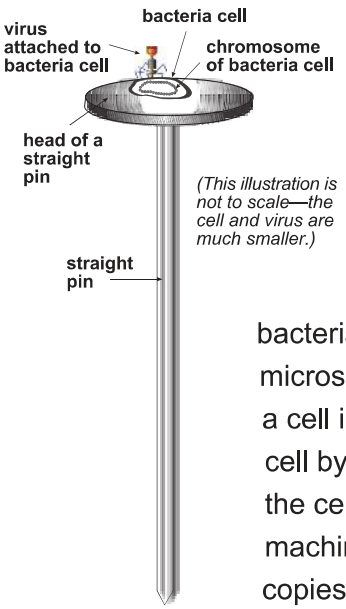
Expository writing explains something. The purpose of this kind of writing is to inform. Below is an expository article titled "Are Viruses Living Things?" The questions under "Previewing Reading Materials" have then been applied to this article and answered.

Are Viruses Living Things?

They are not considered living units, but neither are they considered to be nonliving units. They are too small to see without high-powered microscopes, yet they have the potential to wipe out the human race. They seem to exist only to reproduce but cannot reproduce without killing. They are the quintessential contradiction. They are viruses, and they are some of the more unusual actors in the biological drama.

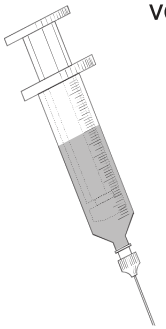
Characteristics of Viruses

Viruses are strange little things that don't fall into any category. In fact, scientists have long argued about whether or not viruses are even alive. They are not made of cells, the basic unit of life. However, they do reproduce. Viruses reproduce by hijacking the equipment of living cells, basically taking over the cell and using its chemicals to make copies of themselves. As they reproduce, they kill the cell they have taken over. Obviously, viruses are consumers.



If viruses aren't made of cells, what are they made of? Mostly, they're a bit of reproductive material inside a protein capsule. They are much smaller than bacteria and can only be seen with very specialized microscopes. A virus operates by somehow tricking a cell into allowing it inside. Then it sabotages the cell by substituting its own reproductive material for the cell's reproductive material. It tricks the cell's machinery into making virus copies instead of cell copies.

Viruses cause both deadly and less serious illnesses. Viruses are very much in the news these days because of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which attacks immune system cells and causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Viruses are responsible for other familiar sicknesses, such as the common cold. Although scientists have developed vaccines to protect us against some viruses, they have not been able to develop vaccines to keep us safe from all of them.



Viruses pose a particular danger to us when they mutate or change to create new and stronger viruses. These new strains of virus are more capable of resisting the body's defenses and outside treatments. Antibiotic medications will not kill them; our own immune systems are on their own in combating these tiny saboteurs.

By examining the structure, life cycle, and actions of viruses, researchers have begun to crack the mystery of their complex nature. Advanced technology has allowed for more accurate identification of these tiny structures and the development of more effective vaccines and drug therapies. The day is still a long way off, however, when viruses will no longer cause illnesses.

1. **Read the title.** What is the *general subject* of the material? On what *specific part* of the general subject will the material focus? Does the title tell you how the *author feels* about the subject?

   The title, "Are Viruses Living Things?" tells us that the general subject is "viruses." We can assume that the article focuses on whether viruses are alive or not. Because the author ended the title with a question, we can also assume he or she is uncertain if viruses are alive or not.

2. **Skim through the selection, looking for chapter titles, headings, subheadings, etc.** How is the material divided? If it is a chapter or article, skim for headings and subheadings. What do these divisions tell us about the content of the article? (Think of them as the bones or skeleton of the material. As you read, place the information and ideas where they belong on the skeleton.)

   This article has two subheadings: "Characteristics of Viruses" and "Viruses and Illnesses." We can assume that the article will discuss these two subtopics. In the first we will learn about the specific characteristics of viruses. In the second we will learn how viruses cause illnesses. Reading with these two subheadings in mind will help us organize information in the article. Think of "Characteristics of Viruses" as one subtopic and "Viruses and Illnesses" as the other. Each piece of information or idea that relates to "Characteristics" should be attached to the first subtopic.

   By studying the title and subheadings, you already have a good idea of what this article will discuss. Knowing what to expect greatly improves your reading comprehension.

3. **Look at the illustrations.** What do they tell you about the subject?

   The illustration of a virus attached to a bacteria cell shows in a picture what we can expect the article to discuss. Without reading anything more, you now know that viruses attach themselves to bacteria cells.

4. **Read the opening paragraph.** How does the author feel about the subject? Is he or she presenting an *explanation* or making an *argument*? If you find a thesis statement, underline it.

   The opening paragraph makes it clear that this article is not an argument—the writer is simply explaining the mysteries and contradictions of viruses. In this explanatory article, the *thesis statement* is the last sentence of the first paragraph: <u>They are viruses and they are some of the more unusual actors in the</u>

biological drama. We can assume that as the article explains the characteristics of viruses and how viruses cause illness, it will be showing how unusual viruses are in the biological world.

5. **Read the first sentence of each body paragraph, looking for the topic or focus of each paragraph.** What is the *topic* or focus of each paragraph? If you find a single word or phrase that tells the topic, underline it.

   In this essay there are four *body paragraphs*—paragraphs 2, 3, 4, and 5. Paragraph 2 begins with the sentence, "Viruses are strange little things that don't fall into any category." We can expect the writer to use the rest of this paragraph to explain why viruses are considered neither living nor nonliving. Underlining the phrase *don't fall into any category* will help us in future readings of this article. The first sentence of paragraph 3 is a question: "If viruses aren't made of cells, what are they made of?"

   Paragraph 4 begins with the sentence, "Viruses cause both deadly and less serious illnesses." We can assume the paragraph contains details about deadly and less serious diseases caused by viruses. Underline the phrase *deadly and less serious illnesses*. Lastly, paragraph 5 opens with the sentence, "Viruses pose a particular danger to us when they mutate or change to create new and stronger viruses." This topic sentence tells us that the remainder of the paragraph will describe why mutated viruses are a "particular danger to us." Underline *particular danger to us when they mutate*.

6. **Read the closing paragraph.** What conclusions does the author draw about the subject?

   The *concluding paragraph* describes the present state of research on viruses. Researchers have made progress but still must do much more work before viruses are understood and less of a threat.

Previewing Persuasive Writing: What Did You Decide?

The article you just studied is called an *expository writing* because it explains something. Another type of article that you will often be asked to read and study is called **persuasive writing**. In a persuasive piece of writing, the writer tries to persuade you to accept and adopt his or her position on an issue. For example, a writer may want to persuade you to vote for or against a particular candidate running for your school's student council. A writer may try to persuade you to give up eating meat and become a vegetarian for the good of humanity. Any issue that reasonable people can disagree on is an issue that can be used in a persuasive essay.

Below is a persuasive article titled "How the Strong Get rEVENge." The questions under "Previewing Reading Materials" have then been applied to this article and answered following the article.

How the Strong Get Revenge

Recently, the news has been filled with accounts of people who have hurt or even killed one another during a feud. In nearly all of these cases, one or both parties felt that they had been wronged by the other. They felt the other had been disrespectful to them. At some point in our lives, almost all of us will experience this feeling. It is not a new feeling to the human race. It does seem, however, that our response to being treated rudely has led people to react with violence. The cast of people who can incite our need for revenge seems limitless. It may be our parents or siblings who make us feel small as they take out their daily frustrations on us. Or maybe it's a teacher. Almost certainly some of our peers will be cruel at times. It can be students from another school or even a stranger on a city bus. All of these people and experiences can wear on our self-esteem and make us feel badly about ourselves. Some would argue that the way to get revenge on those who hurt or insult us is to hurt them back. I am here to argue that there is a far sweeter kind of revenge that does not include violence.

Hurting Back to Feel Good

There is something to be said about hurting those who have hurt us. There is something about being insulted or hurt by someone that leaves us with a white-hot pain in our souls. Almost immediately the pain festers and turns to rage. The rage rushes through us like wildfire, burning up our good sense and our self-control, and leaving in its wake nothing but itself. Sometimes we feel that the only way to put that wildfire out is to strike back at the offender—be it a friend or enemy, family member or stranger. No doubt there is a momentary satisfaction when you strike back in word or deed. You get to say those famous last words to yourself: "No one can treat *me* like that!"

This satisfaction, however, is short-lived. We may then find ourselves in one of two positions: (a) We strike back and find ourselves in trouble, having been caught violating a school policy, or local or state law. Violence in almost every situation is illegal. When we respond with violence, we have helped the offender to keep on hurting us; (b) We get away with our revenge—but not really. We thought the offender was a loser for acting the way he did, and now we've imitated his behavior. He's tricked us into the old *monkey see, monkey do* response. You may be doing the hurting, but the offender is pulling your strings.

The Worthy Life Alternative

So what is this sweeter kind of revenge? It's simple and it is the cornerstone of most modern religions: Live a worthy life! To get even with someone who has done you harm, don't attempt to harm him or yourself. Do not get even with an unsupportive or unloving parent by committing crimes or doing drugs. Do not get even with cruel classmates by fighting or starting rumors. The best kind of revenge against people who have harmed you is to live a life of which you can be proud. Work hard at your interests and be as successful as you can be in life. When you live a worthy life, you raise your self-esteem and end the hurt others have caused you. Best of all, you use revenge to improve yourself and to learn to take control of your own life.

Where Do You Want to Be in 20 Years?

Do some imagining right now to compare the two kinds of rEVENge available. In the first scenario, your peer group hurts you and you respond by acting out. You fight or lose interest in school and hobbies—somehow you believe that such acting out will show others that you are the boss and no one can show you disrespect. In 20 years, when your dreams are just memories, that nasty peer group is smugly smiling, as they recount how easy it was to steal your dreams. However, there's another scenario; try it on for size. That peer group sees you in 20 years, a successful and respected person, and they can see how you had something strong inside of you. You responded to their rudeness by raising your self-esteem and keeping focused on your future. Now I ask you: How much sweeter could revenge be than that?

1. **Read the title.** What is the *general subject* of the material? On what *specific part* of the general subject will the material focus? Does the title tell you how the *author feels* about the subject?

   The title, "How the Strong Get reEVENge," tells us that the general subject is "revenge." We can assume that the article focuses on the way people with some kind of strength get revenge. This kind of strength could be strength of character. Notice that the word *revenge* in the title is written to show that the word *EVEN* is contained within it. Although we cannot be certain, the writer may be suggesting a new angle on getting revenge.

2. **Skim through the selection, looking for chapter titles, headings, subheadings, etc.** How is the material divided? If it is a chapter or article, skim for headings and subheadings. What do these divisions tell us about the content of the article? (Think of them as the bones or skeleton of the material. As you read, place the information and ideas where they belong on the skeleton.)

   This article has three subheadings: "Hurting Back to Feel Good," "The Worthy Life Alternative," and "Where Do You Want to Be in 20 Years?" We can assume that the article will discuss these three subtopics. Under the first subtopic, the writer will discuss what

we get out of hurting those who have offended us. Under the second subtopic, he will discuss an "alternative" to hurting back, an alternative that includes a "worthy life." And under the last subtopic, he will most likely discuss how the choices we make when we are offended can affect where we find ourselves in the future. We cannot be positive that each of these subtopics will include these specific discussions, but these are well-educated guesses. Reading with these three subheadings in mind will help us organize information in the article. Think of the "Hurting Back to Feel Good" as one subtopic, "The Worthy Life Alternative" as another subtopic, and the "Where Do You Want to Be in 20 Years?" as the third subtopic. Each piece of information or idea that relates to each subtopic should be attached to that subtopic.

By studying the title and subheadings, you already have a good idea of what this article will discuss. Knowing what to expect greatly improves your reading comprehension.

3. **Looking at the subheadings.** What do they tell you about the subject?

   This essay, unlike the one on viruses, does not include illustrations.

4. **Read the opening paragraph.** How does the author feel about the subject? Is he or she presenting an explanation or making an argument? If you find a thesis statement, underline it.

   The opening paragraph suggests that the writer thinks the use of violence in response to others being disrespectful is not acceptable. He understands that being treated rudely hurts and "wears on our self-esteem," but he ends the opening paragraph with his thesis statement: "I am here to argue that there is a far sweeter kind of revenge that does not include violence." This opening paragraph also makes it clear that the essay is a persuasive one—the writer is presenting an argument.

   Knowing that this essay is organized as an argument can tell us much about what to expect in its content and organization. We can expect that the writer will discuss both sides of the issue. In this case, we can expect that the writer will explain why using violence is not a good response. We can also expect that he

will argue for an alternative to using violence. His argument may include appealing to our emotions, using statistics, and using reason or logic. The more kinds of essays we become familiar with, the more kinds of organizational patterns we will recognize.

5. **Read the first sentence of each body paragraph, looking for the topic or focus of each paragraph.** What is the topic or focus of each paragraph? If you find a single word or phrase that tells the topic, underline it.

   In this essay, there are three body paragraphs—paragraphs 2, 3, and 4. The first sentence of these body paragraphs are as follows:

   Paragraph 2: There is something to be said about hurting those who have hurt us.

   Paragraph 3: This satisfaction, however, is short-lived.

   Paragraph 4: So what is this sweeter kind of revenge?

   We can expect that paragraph 2 will discuss why hurting those who have hurt us gives us some satisfaction. Paragraph 3 will discuss why this satisfaction "is short-lived." And paragraph 4 will describe the kind of revenge the writer thinks is superior to violence.

   As you can see, by reading the key places in the essay—the title and subheadings, and the topic sentences—we can discover much of what the essay is about and how it is organized.

6. **Read the closing paragraph.** What conclusions does the author draw about the subject?

   The concluding paragraph adds another perspective to this discussion. It asks readers to imagine 20 years into the future. This helps bring the writer's argument to a close and reemphasizes his point about a sweeter revenge not including violence.

Metropolis Park: The City Has an Obligation to Make It Happen

A Promise Reconsidered

The city of Metropolis purchased 100 acres of land in northwest Metropolis five years ago. The original intention was to build a city park in an area where few parks exist. This lack of parks exists despite the fact that the northwest is the fastest growing area in Metropolis and has the highest concentration of families with young children.

The original intention was to build a city park in an area where few parks exist.

However, even though the city spent over one million dollars on the purchase, the park has not been built. Now, city officials are considering selling the property in order to balance their budget. Property values have skyrocketed in the past three years. Officials feel they could more than triple their original investment in the land parcel. The city would also benefit from the property taxes new owners would pay, once the land was sold. In addition, officials would save the millions of dollars the park would cost to build.

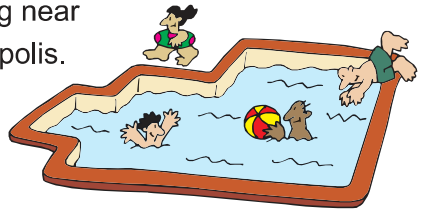
Despite these benefits, Metropolis has an obligation to follow through with their original plans to build the park. Doing otherwise would be dishonorable.

Don't Betray Original Owner's Generosity

To begin with, selling the property for profit would be a betrayal of the original owner. Sandra Lolligrand sold the land below market value to the city with the clear intent that it would be a park. Unfortunately, Ms. Lolligrand did not make the legal documents clear enough to bind the city to this decision. If she had known city officials intended to buy her land, hold onto it, then sell it for three times as much, surely she would have done that herself. The city should honor the civic-mindedness of Sandra Lolligrand. Not doing so will go against every principle city officials have based Metropolis' government on since its founding.

Sandra Lolligrand sold the land below market value to the city with the clear intent that it would be a park.

Finally, within the past five years, the city has been using the promise of the park to get people living near the city limits to agree to be annexed into Metropolis. Annexation brings with it several benefits. One of these is a world-class, city-operated parks-and-recreation system. Not delivering on this promise would also cast city officials in a dishonorable light. Again, they would be betraying the city's founding principles.



The city promised a world-class, city-operated parks-and-recreation system to encourage people to move there.

When the city of Metropolis became a city more than 50 years ago, officials campaigned on the promise to be the voice of the people and represent them honestly. If the promise they made to newly settled residents of Metropolis is not kept, present-day officials are indeed betraying the democratic principles the city was founded on.

Understanding Words: Using Clues to Find Meanings

While sculptors can use *clay or marble, writers use words to* build *phrases, sentences, and paragraphs.*

All artists and craftsmen have tools that allow them to produce their work. A skilled writer is such an artist. While sculptors can use clay or marble, writers use words to *build* phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Skilled writers are aware of how to use these words effectively. They know how to make readers feel a certain way or to understand different levels of meaning. Such writers use words to make readers like or dislike a character. They help readers understand the true meaning of the text and feel comfortable or uncomfortable in a reading situation.

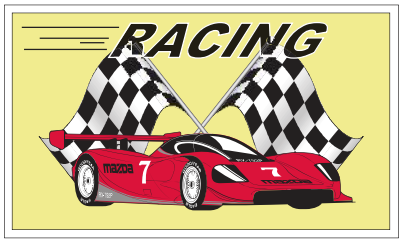
Skilled readers see and feel everything writers want them to see. They are able to find meaning from the writer's words.

Many words contain meaning clues. Other words are surrounded by them. These clues can help you understand unfamiliar words. Learning to use these clues will add to your reading skills.

Context Clues: Using the Words You Know to Understand the Words You Don't

Context means "setting" or "environment." Sentences and paragraphs are the setting, or context, of words. We use context to help us understand words. You are probably quite an expert in the process of identifying meanings from **context clues**. You just may not realize it.

We use *context clues* to understand other things as well. When you meet new people, you identify them based on their family, clothes, accent, or home. Looking around their room, you might use their books or belongings to figure out their personality. A person who has car posters on her walls may dream about being a race car driver.



A person who has car posters on her walls may dream about being a race car driver.

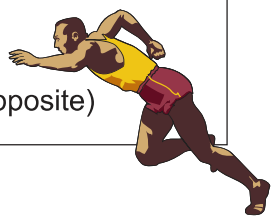
The same process can be used to identify the meanings of unknown words. Look around

(before and after) the unknown word and at the other words in the sentence. Look at what the entire paragraph or essay is about. Use all of these context clues to determine the meaning of the unknown word.

Context Clue

The runner needed to distract his mind from the race and direct his attention to something else.

Word: distract
Meaning: not pay attention
Clue: and direct his attention (opposite)



There are several types of context clues that writers use to help readers understand unknown words. The chart on the following page lists and defines types of context clues. It also provides an example of each clue.

Examples of Context Clues

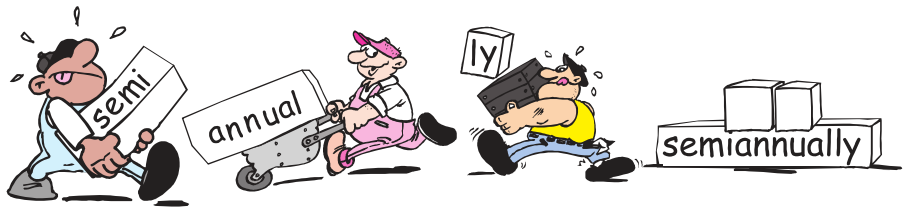
Type of Context Clue	**Example** (unknown word is underlined; clues are **bolded**)
1. **Synonyms** mean the same thing as the unknown word.	His diffidence, or **shyness**, kept John from entering the talent show.
2. **Definitions** explain the unknown word.	Nefarious means being **extremely evil or wicked**.
3. **Antonyms** mean the opposite of the unknown word.	Hector **used to be wasteful**, throwing everything away, but now he is frugal and recycles everything he can.
4. **Comparisons/Contrasts** show how the unknown word is the same as or different from something familiar.	**Comparison:** Like many **carefree** creatures, the blithe little girl skipped along. **Contrast:** He tried to ameliorate the situation but ended up **making matters worse**.
5. Clues contained in a **series** show how a word is part of a familiar group.	Some politicians only talk with sycophants, **apple-polishers, flatterers, and yes-men**.

Word Structure Clues: Get to the Meaning of Prefixes, Suffixes, and Root or Base Words

Any given word may have three parts—**prefixes**, **suffixes**, and **root or base words**. A *prefix* is a letter or group of letters added to the beginning of a word. An example is the "un" in *un*done. Prefixes often change the meaning of the word from positive to negative, or negative to positive.

A *suffix* is a letter or group of letters added to the end of a word to change its meaning. An example is the "ly" in bright*ly*. Suffixes often tell you the kind of word it is, such as an **adjective** or **adverb**. An *adjective* tells something about or *modifies* a **noun** or a **pronoun**, whereas an *adverb* modifies a **verb**, adjective, or another adverb. Therefore, a suffix will determine how a word is to be used in a sentence.

A *root word* is sometimes called a *base word*. These are the main parts of the word to which suffixes and prefixes are added. However, unlike a base word, a root word cannot stand alone. A root word must be attached to a prefix, a suffix, or both. For example, *annual* is a base word to which could be added a prefix (*semi*annually) or a suffix (annual*ly*) or both (*semi*annual*ly*). The prefix *semi* means "half of." The base word *annual* means "a year" and the suffix *ly* tells us it is used as an *adverb*. By knowing the meanings of prefixes, base words, and suffixes, it is easy to unlock the meaning of unknown words.



semi (prefix) + **annual** **(base word)** + **ly** (suffix) = **semiannually**

Many prefixes, suffixes, and root or base words come from Latin and Greek. Each of these "derived" word parts has its own meaning which is similar to the meaning of the word from which it came. For instance, *portfolio* comes from the Latin *portare* - "to carry out"- and *folium* - "a leaf." How would knowing this help you understand the meaning of *portfolio*?

Knowing the building blocks of our language helps you to better understand unfamiliar vocabulary. Increasing your vocabulary is a worthy goal because you'll be able to communicate more precisely. The tables of prefixes and suffixes on the next page will help you do this.

Commonly Used Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
ab-	from, away	abduct - to kidnap or lead away
anti-	against	anticommunist - opposing the Communist Party
bi-	both, double, twice	biweekly - happening twice each week or every two weeks
co-	together with	coworker - someone who works with another person
con-	together with	conspire - to plot or plan with another person
com-	together with	compose - to bring different parts together
de-	from, down	degrade - to take away from someone or something's value
dis-	apart, away, reverse	dismiss - to send away
em-	in, into	embrace - to take someone into your arms
en-	in, into	endanger - to put something or someone in danger
ex-, e-	out	expel - to drive out eject - to throw out
fore-	before, front part of	forefront - at the very front
il-	not	illegal - not legal
im-	not	immature - not mature
in-	not	incorrect - not correct
ir-	not	irregular - not regular
mis-	badly, wrongly	misbehave - to not behave or act badly
non-	not	nonexistent - not real; not existing
post-	after, following	postwar - after the war
pre-	before	preview - to see before others
pro-	forward, in favor	progress - to move forward
re-	back, again	revive - to bring back to life
sub-	under	submerge - to put under
trans-	across, over	transfer - to carry from one person or place to another
un-	not, release	unfair - not fair unbutton - to release from being buttoned

Suffix	Meaning	Example
-able, -ible	able to be	manageable - something that can be handled or managed edible - something that can be eaten
-age	act of	storage - act of storing
-al	relating to, like, of	natural - relating to nature secretarial - like a secretary
-ance, -ancy	act, quality, state	admittance - being allowed entrance consistency - state of being the same; being dependable
-ant, -ent	performing agent, one who	servant - a person who serves dependent - one who depends upon another
-ary	relating to	dietary - relating to what you eat
-ate	cause, make	segregate - cause a group to be apart from others
-cian	having a certain skill	musician - one skilled in music
-en	made of, to become or cause to be	silken - made of silk weaken - cause to be weak
-ence, ency	state of, quality	difference - state of being different urgency - needing immediate attention
-ese	a native of	Japanese - someone who was born in Japan
-ful	full of	helpful - full of help
-ion, tion	act or condition of	multiplication - act of multiplying
-ist	one who does or uses	scientist - a person who is an expert in science
-ity	state of, quality	captivity - state of being captured
-ive	causing, making	abusive - causing abuse
-ize	make	publicize - make known to the public
-less	without	fearless - without fear
-ly	like, manner of	fearlessly - done without fear
-ment	result of, action	enjoyment - result of enjoying something
-ness	state of, condition	lifelessness - having no life
-ous	full of, having	spacious - full of space mysterious - having an air of mystery
-ship	state of, quality	ownership - state of owning something
-ward	in the direction of	eastward - toward the east
-y	inclined to, tend to	cheery - inclined to be cheerful

Precise Language: Using Specific Words to Convey Exact Images and Feelings

Like any fine craftsmen, skilled writers know exactly which tool to use for each job. Words are writers' tools. Therefore, these word craftsmen know how to use these tools effectively. Good writers know what words to use to make their readers feel sad, angry, fearful, or joyful. They also know which words will paint exact images in their readers' imaginations. Look at the following examples.

Victoria noticed the woman sitting at the next table.

Victoria noticed...

The sentence is simply stated and gives only two facts.

- Victoria saw a woman.
- The woman was sitting at the table next to Victoria.

However, we know little about the woman sitting there. Is she young, elderly, well dressed, tired? Also, what does Victoria feel as she looks at the woman? We have absolutely no clues about the significance of this incident.

Now read the same sentence, rewritten with precise *verbs*, *nouns*, *adjectives*, and *adverbs*.

Victoria gazed admiringly at the stylish young woman sitting at the next table.

Victoria glazed...

Obviously, Victoria is impressed with the woman's dress and manners. The words *gazed*, *admiringly*, and *stylish* help you know this. These words give an favorable feeling to the sentence.

Look how the meaning changes when we change the words.

Victoria glared at the loud, obnoxious woman at the next table.

Victoria glared...

Here, the words create a completely different scene. Obviously, Victoria is *not* impressed with the woman. The words *glared*, *loud*, and *obnoxious* tell us this. Here, the writer's words convey an unfavorable feeling.

Many words in our English vocabulary have two meanings. All words have *denotive* meanings. The **denotation** of a word is its literal meaning, or the exact definition you find in a dictionary. Many words also have connotative meaning. **Connotations** are meanings that readers associate with particular words. Using words that are emotion-filled gives the author control of his or her work. Some words create positive or *favorable connotations* and some create negative or *unfavorable connotations*. For example, if you say someone is *relaxing*, it sounds favorable; however, if you say the person is *loafing*, it sounds unfavorable. Using precisely the right words creates the exact images in the readers' thoughts the writer wanted to be there. Such words serve the same purpose as different colors for a painter.

As you read, pay special attention to the nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs writers use. These specially chosen words give you clues to meaning.

Quick Review

- **Nouns** name a person, place, thing, or idea.
- **Pronouns** are used instead of a noun to name a person, place, thing, or idea.
- **Verbs** express physical action, mental action, or state of being or tell what the subject of the sentence is, has, does, or feels.
- **Adjectives** modify or tell something about a noun or pronoun.
- **Adverbs** modify or tell something about a verb, adjective, or another adverb.

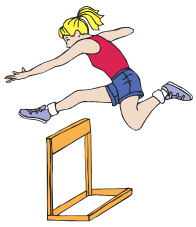
Let's practice using specific words. This will give you some insight into how good writers use the tool of language.

Many of the words or phrases we read are intended to say exactly what they say. If we are reading directions on how to fix a flat tire, we might find the following sentence in the manual: "Turn the lug nuts counterclockwise." If we want to get the wheel off, we would do best to follow the language exactly as it reads. Similarly, if we ask someone for directions and he tells us to drive west, we would do best to drive west as it appears on a compass or map.

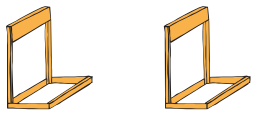
Drive west.

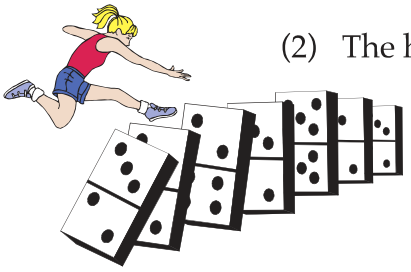
When language is intended to mean exactly what it says, the language is called **literal language**. We use *literal language* all the time, especially when our purpose is to convey information, explanations, or directions. You will find a literal meaning of a word if you look in the dictionary for a definition. Literal language uses words for their exact, direct meaning.

Literal language is used in every kind of reading you will do. However, in some kinds of writing literal language is mixed or combined with **figurative language**. *Figurative language* is used to help readers *see* something special or *feel* a particular way. It is often used to make a comparison between two things. For example, compare the following two descriptions of a series of hurdles on a running track:



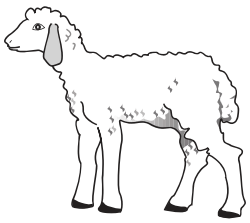
(1) The hurdles were placed one after the other at five-yard intervals.





(2) The hurdles looked like giant dominoes standing one after another, so that if the first one were tipped, every one thereafter would come slamming down.

In the first example, literal language describes the hurdles in a direct way. It uses no comparisons and the language means exactly what it says. In the second example, figurative language is used to *compare* hurdles to dominoes. This comparison tries to turn on the readers' senses so they can see and possibly hear something in a vivid way.



Figurative language makes ideas leap off the page for readers. You will find figurative language in cartoons, poetry, tall tales, and other literature. You will also find figurative language in songs and nursery rhymes—"My love for you is as *deep as the ocean*," "…like a *diamond in the sky*," "Mary had a little lamb, his fleece was *white as snow.*"

You also use figurative language daily, maybe even hourly. Someone asks you how you feel, and you answer: "I slept like a *log*." You use figurative language to make your points and experiences more vivid: "Drawing fingernails across the blackboard makes my skin *crawl*!"

Common Types of Figurative Language: Similes, Metaphors, Personification, and Onomatopoeia

There are many different types of figurative language. Three of the more common types are **similes**, **metaphors**, and **personification**.

Similes

A *simile* uses the word *like* or *as* to make a comparison between two different or unlike things.

Simile: One can never be ashamed of his own people when he knows that they have dreams *as beautiful as white snow on a tall pine*.

Simile: She went after her dreams *like a bear after honey*.

In the first example, Tom Whitecloud uses *as* to compare "dreams" to "white snow on a tall pine." When you read a simile such as this one, let your imagination play. You might, for example, remember having seen the image of soft, white snow high above—how pure the snow looked and how it seemed weightless, almost floating. It seemed to carry your thoughts above the routine of daily life. The second example of a simile makes us feel how persistently the girl pursued her dreams.

Metaphors

A *metaphor* says one thing *is* another thing or compares two different or unlike things *without* using the words *like* or *as*.

Metaphor: Downtown is a congested beehive.

Metaphor: The fog was a heavy, wet blanket preventing us from seeing a view of the beach and water.

Note that in the two examples of metaphors above, comparisons are made without the use of *as* or *like*. In the first example, the writer says downtown is *a* congested beehive, not that it is *like* a congested beehive. In the second example, the writer doesn't say the fog is *like* a heavy, wet blanket but that it is one.

Similes and metaphors are comparisons to make a point. These *figure of speech* are not to be taken as *literal language*. The writer uses the words to describe and create images so that the reader sees something special or feels a particular way. These *figures of speech* are not to be taken as *literal language*.

Personification

Personification gives human qualities to lifeless objects or ideas. Read the examples below.

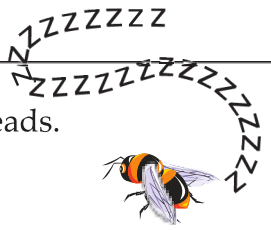
Personification:	The white line of the lake ends at a black forest, and above the trees *the blue winds are dancing.*
Personification:	The traffic *crawled almost to a stop* when every radio station announced peace had been declared and the war had ended.

Winds cannot dance and cars cannot crawl. However, the reader understands that the writer is indicating that the winds are gently blowing, making the leaves move in a way that looks like dancing. Similarly, the cars described in the second example are barely moving. Personification allows the reader to see ideas and objects in new ways.

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia appeals to readers' imaginations by using words that sound like their meanings. It is used to create effects and reinforce meaning. Some examples of *onomatopoeia* are *ooze*, *slurp*, *thud*, *splash*, and *sizzle*. Read the following examples.

Onomatopoeia:	The bees *buzzed* around our heads.
Onomatopoeia:	He *twanged* his guitar.



Reading Literal and Figurative Language: Noticing the Difference

As a reader, you will often run into a mix of literal and figurative language. A writer may be using literal language to describe the way we hear music, for example. He may be writing about how music makes molecules spin in a certain way. When those molecules reach our ears, our ears translate those spinning molecules into the beautiful sounds of music. Now imagine that right in the middle of this literal description, the writer wants to make a point in a particularly vivid way. Read the two paragraphs below to see how the writer switches from literal to figurative language.

The molecule of sound coming from the orchestra bounces into another molecule and gives it spin. That molecule bounces into another and gives it spin. On and on it goes until the last molecule enters your ear. This whole process *is like a wave in the ocean*. One wave passes its energy on and creates another wave. This next wave then passes its energy on and creates a third wave. On and on it goes, each wave passing energy along, until the final one crashes onto the beach. What finally washed across your toes as you stood on the beach was not the water from a wave that started way off on the horizon. It was the energy from that far-off wave.

The molecule of sound coming from the orchestra bounces into another molecule and gives it spin.

Another way to understand how one molecule of sound bounces into another, and then another, until the final one enters your ear, is to think of a very long pool table. You are at one end of the pool table and your friend is at the other end. On this pool table are a long line of balls. Your friend rolls the first ball into the second ball. The first ball stops and the second ball keeps rolling, until it hits the third ball. The

That last ball has been powered by the energy imparted to the very first ball and then passed all the way along to the last ball.

second ball then stops and the third ball rolls into the fourth ball. On and on it goes, until the very last ball rolls to you. That last ball has been powered by the energy imparted to the very first ball and then passed all the way along to the last ball.

The writer switches from literal language to figurative language when he uses the simile of a *wave in the ocean* to draw a vivid comparison between *sound* waves and *water* waves. He also uses the comparison of a long line of pool balls to sound molecules to help you vividly see how sound works. The point to remember is that when you are reading, be prepared to stop, translate, and appreciate figurative language. Figurative language will help you see old things in new ways and see the familiar in something that is strange. Of course, the first thing you must do is to recognize figurative language when it appears. The following practices will improve your skill.

Evaluating What You Read: Separating the Valid from the Invalid

Much of what you read has been written by people who hope to convince you that one particular opinion, idea, or commercial product is better than another. Many of these writers are quite skillful with words. For this reason, you must learn to evaluate reading materials in order to determine whether the content is reliable or unreliable.

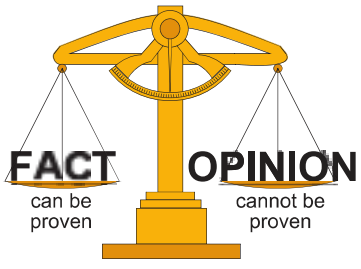
In order to evaluate a piece of writing, you must decide whether what is being said is true or not. You must rely upon the knowledge and experiences you bring to each reading assignment to help you make this determination. Often, you can easily tell if a writer has misrepresented or misinterpreted information.

However, usually writers are more careful in reporting information. They are also usually very skillful in stating their opinions. Telling the difference between fact and opinion can be difficult.

Fact or Opinion: Scientific Evidence or Personal Belief

Everything that you read, both creative and informational material, contains facts and opinions. A *fact* is a statement that can be proven true or false. "The state of Texas raises more cattle than any other state in the nation" is a statement of fact—"The state of Texas is the most beautiful state in the nation" is not a statement of fact—it cannot be proven.

An *opinion* is a statement of what someone believes to be true but cannot prove. Very often, opinions describe someone's emotions or reactions to an event or idea. Opinions often are based on someone's personal experience rather than scientific evidence or a provable fact. Often, opinions are signalled by certain words such as *I feel*, *I think*, or *in my opinion.* Judgement words such as *best*, *most beautiful*, and *most talented* also signal opinions. However, authors sometimes state opinions as if they are facts, just as we do in real-life conversations. For example, how many times have you heard statements such as the following? "Melissa is snobby." "That test was unfair." "Strawberries are the best!"



More than likely, Melissa's parents and best friends do not think she is snobby; students who studied hard for the test found it fair; and certainly there are people who do not enjoy eating strawberries.

The following chart will help you evaluate your reading. When you evaluate an article or piece of reading to determine whether it is valid, you are, in a way, putting it on trial. You are asking whether it should be believed. You act as the jury who will declare whether this article or essay uses facts and evidence to support its claims and opinions. Be careful: A skillful writer can make us believe something by playing on our emotions or appealing to our **biases** or preconceived beliefs and attitudes toward or against something.

Therefore, as you read, ask yourself the following questions in order to evaluate the validity or soundness of the material.

Evaluating Something You Are Reading

1. **What is the author's purpose in writing?**
   - Is the author trying to convince you to change your mind about something?
   - Is the author angry about an injustice and hoping to have this injustice corrected?
   - Is the author attempting to sell or promote a product or idea?

2. **Is it clear which statements are facts and which statements are opinions?**
   - How do these statements compare to what you already know?

3. **What facts does the author use to support or justify his or her opinions?**
   - Do the facts or evidence the author uses justify his or her opinion?

4. **What techniques does the author use to convince you of his or her point of view?**
   - Does the author appeal to your vanity?
   - Does the author assume that the reader has certain biases and prejudices?
   - Does the author emphasize or leave out important facts in an effort to influence your thinking?

5. **How effective are the techniques the author uses?**
   - Do you feel inclined to agree with his or her argument?
   - Do you feel insulted or angry in any way because the author assumed you possessed certain biases or opinions?
   - Has the author touched on certain likes, dislikes, or fears that you have about a certain subject?

Understanding Visual References: Reading Signs, Maps, Graphs, and Tables

Visual means "something that can be seen." **Visual references** are things we can see that tell us information. They are symbols we use to conveniently convey information. The *visual references* that we encounter in everyday experiences take a variety of forms. They also offer different kinds of information.

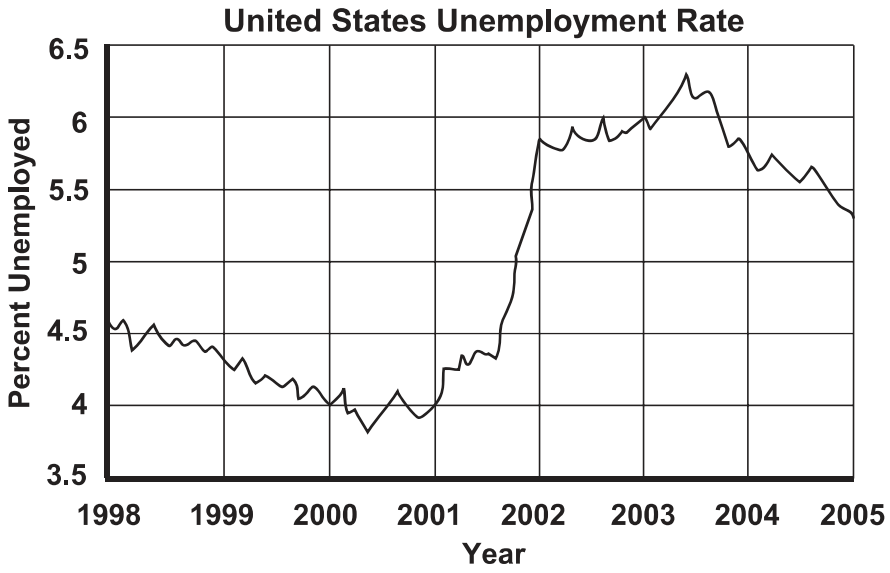
Most of your textbooks contain graphic organizers or visual displays. These displays show how facts relate to one another. Most of these can be categorized as graphs, tables, or diagrams.

Understanding Graphs

A graph is information in picture form. The information a graph shows is called *data*. Graphs are used for purposes of comparison. They allow us to see clearly how one quantity compares with another quantity. Graphs are usually divided into three kinds: *line graphs*, *pie graphs* and *bar graphs*.

The Line Graph

Most people are familiar with the *line graph*, often used to show how things *change over time*. Below is an example.



Line Graph

This is a graph of the United States Unemployment Rate. It covers the time between 1998 and 2005. The line graph begins with an L-shaped grid.

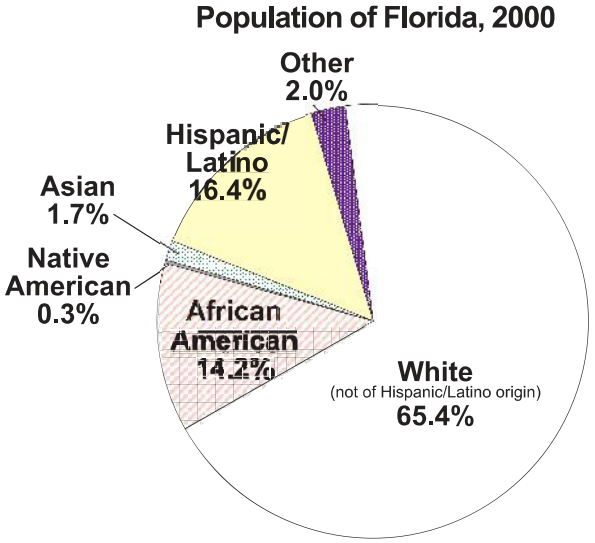
The line graph example shows percentages from 3.5 to 6.5%. The *vertical line* (↕) represents the *subject of the data*. The subject of this line graph is the percent of Americans unemployed.

The *horizontal line* (↔) shows *time*. This graph is divided into one-year segments.

When was unemployment at its highest? At its lowest?

The Pie Graph

A *pie graph* is used to *compare parts of a whole*. The shape of a pie graph is a *circle*. The circle represents the *whole pie*. This whole pie can be an entire country. It can be the total amount of products sold. The whole pie below stands for Florida's total population in 2000.



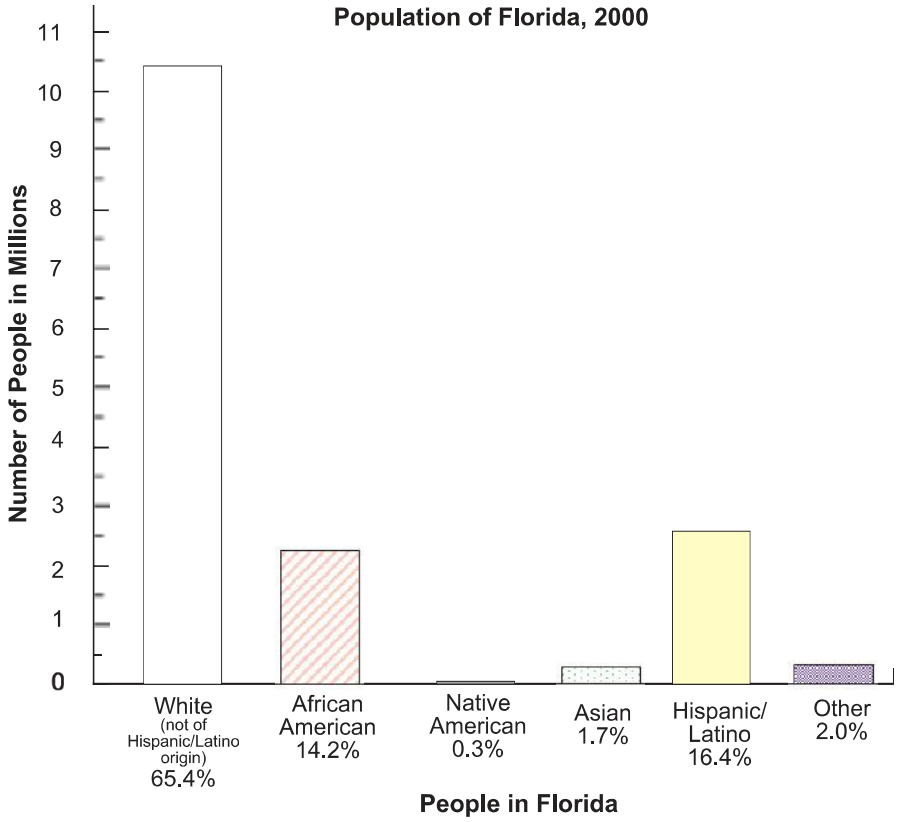
Pie Graph

A pie graph shows proportions. In the pie graph above, you can see that 16.4% of Florida's population is Hispanic/Latino. This percentage is represented by a *slice* of the whole pie. The whole pie represents 100% of Florida's population and then each slice is labeled.

Which group has the fewest residents in Florida?

The Bar Graph

The *bar graph* uses lengths of bars. These bars show *how several items compare to each other at the same time*.



Bar Graph

The above example shows the same information as the pie graph. The vertical lines show numbers or percentages. This example also shows the number of people. Each number represents that number times one million people.

The bars show how the different ethnic groups compare to each other based on percentage.

Understanding Tables

A *table* is similar to a graph. Both are information in picture form. Tables present words and numbers in an organized way. This allows you to see how these words and numbers relate to each other.

- A table contains *rows*. Rows are presented *horizontally*.
- A table also contains *columns*. Columns are presented *vertically*.

Some common types of tables include *comparison tables*, *distance tables*, and *conversion tables*. You can also custom make a table to fit your needs.

The Comparison Table

The table to the right is a *comparison table*. This table shows you the bloom colors of different plants. (A • means that a plant has flowers of that color.)

Bloom Colors of Different Plants

Plant	Bloom Colors			
	White	Yellow-Orange	Pink-Red	Blue-Purple
Crape Myrtle	•		•	•
Althea	•		•	•
Camellia	•		•	•
Rose	•	•	•	•

The Distance Table

Mileage Table

	Ocala	West Palm Beach	Pensacola
Tampa	94	210	479
Tallahassee	191	476	194
Jacksonville	104	304	366
Orlando	83	183	468
Miami	344	78	729

A *distance table* shows mileage from one point to another. Finding this distance is simple. Find your starting point in one row or column. Then find your destination in the other direction. Find where the row and column meet. This is the distance between locations.

The Conversion Table

The *conversion table* is very useful. It helps you change information from one form to another. The table to the right converts standard United States measurements to metric measurements.

Metric Conversion Chart		
When You Know	Multiply by	to Find
1 ounce	28	1 gram
1 pound	0.45	1 kilogram
1 teaspoon	5	1 milliliter
1 cup	0.24	1 liter
1 quart	0.95	1 liter

Custom-Made Tables

Tables can show any kind of information. Using a table helps organize information you have found. The table below shows the healthy ranges of body fat for human beings. The table shows the different ranges for males and females.

Acceptable Ranges for Percent Body Fat*		
Age	Male	Female
13	10-25%	17-32%
14	10-25%	17-32%
15	10-25%	17-32%
16	10-25%	17-32%
17	10-25%	17-32%
17+	10-25%	17-32%

** calculated from triceps and skinfold measurements*

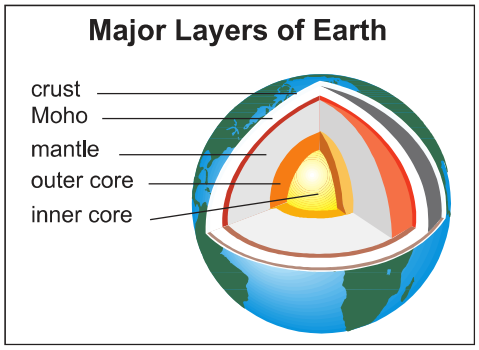
You can custom make a table for any information you gather.

Understanding Diagrams

A *diagram* is a special type of drawing. A diagram can show you several things. It can show you how something is put together. It can show you how the parts relate to each other. It can also show you how something works. The two most common diagrams are the picture diagram and the line diagram.

The Picture Diagram

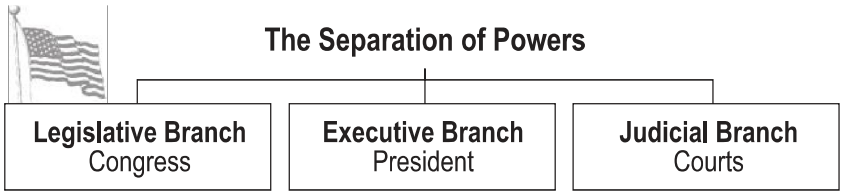
A *picture diagram* is just what it sounds like. A picture diagram is a picture or drawing. The picture can show the subject in different ways. Some parts could be left out. Other parts could be enlarged. This allows the writer to emphasize and discuss certain parts. To the right is a diagram of the Earth. The outer section has been cut away. This lets you see the different layers. You can see how they compare to each other in thickness. You can also see where they are located.



Three major layers of Earth—the crust, mantle, and core. The Moho is the boundary between the Earth's crust and mantle.

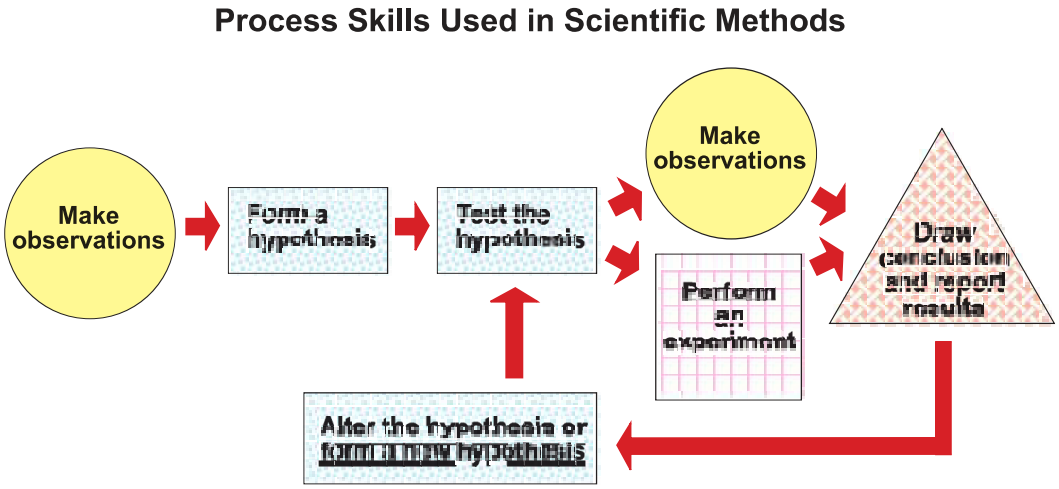
A *line diagram* shows the relationship between ideas. It uses lines, symbols, and words to do this. The line diagram below shows how our government's power is divided.

Here, the different boxes are on the same level. They are also equal in size. This means each division is equal in importance.



Sometimes, a line diagram will show a process. Usually, the diagram will show steps from top to bottom. You will know where to begin and where to end by looking at the diagram.

Look at the diagram of the steps in the scientific method. This diagram is also called a *flowchart*. Flowcharts show a sequence of events, actions, roles, or decisions.

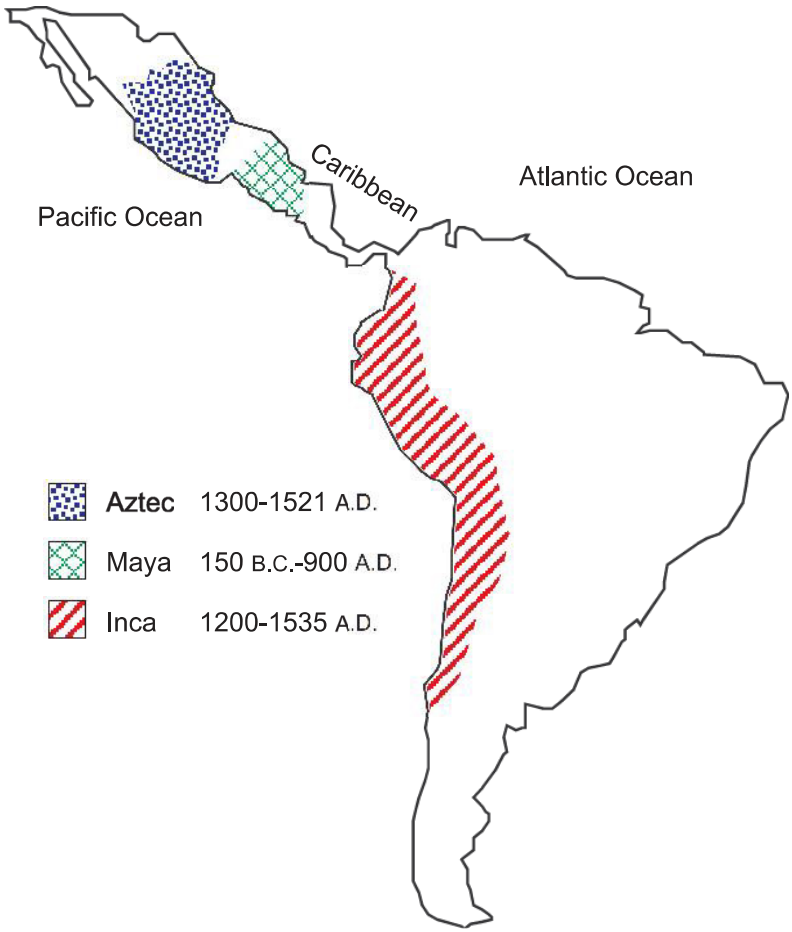


Understanding Maps

A *map* is a drawing or picture of a geographical area of the earth of a part of the earth. There are many kinds of maps that are used today—maps of early settlements (historical), maps of national boundaries (political), and maps showing information about a region of the world. We can find out about a country's rainfall, road system, and agricultural production from maps. Because a map cannot show every street, river, railroad, or product, symbols must be used to represent these things. These symbols are explained in a legend, also called a key. An atlas is a collection of maps, generally related to each other.

Below is a historical map of Central and South America. The legend explains where and when the three major civilizations lived in these regions.

Native People Empires: The Maya, Aztec, and Inca

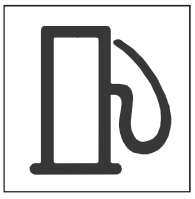


Understanding Signs

Certain information can be a matter of life or death. For this reason, a set of universal signs and symbols have been devised. These symbols require no certain language or reading ability. They are easily recognized by their shape and design. Look at the following.

wheelchair accessible

radioactive

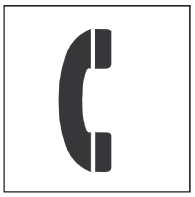


gas pump

no diving

restrooms

fire extinguisher



telephone

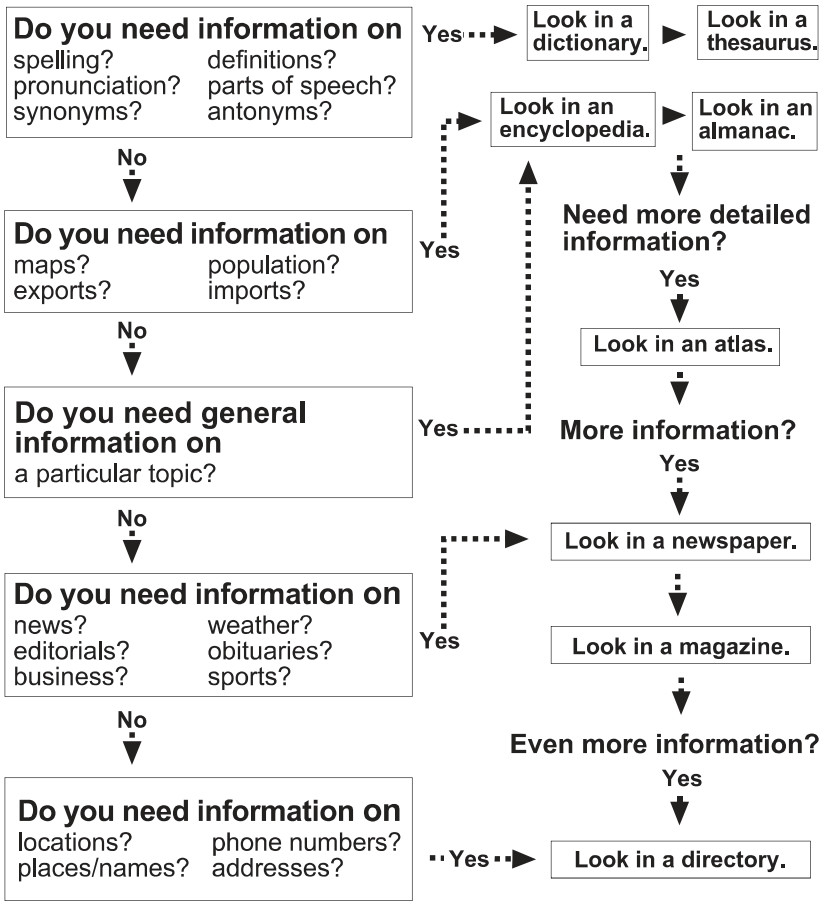
water fountain

Finding Information: Identifying the Right Source

As you advance in your studies, you may often need to find specific information not included in your textbook. To find this additional information, you will need to refer to another source. That source then becomes what we call a reference or reference source. A reference source is a person or thing that you use as a source of information or help.

The amount of information and number of reference sources available to us grow every day. For every new idea, product, or process, there is a massive amount of information created. Also, new and expanded references telling us where to find these sources are provided and revised almost o □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □e is to learn how to find, understand, and use these sources. The chart below includes a variety of resources and kinds of information found in each. Many of these resources may be found in your home, online, and in your school or local library.

Information Resources



Using the Parts of a Book

Now you have located the right source of information. Your next step is to learn to locate specific information within that particular source. Most books contain the following parts.

Title Page

The *title page* is usually the first page. Here, you will find the following:

- the book's title
- the author's name
- the publisher's name
- the place of publication.

Copyright Page

The *copyright page* follows the title page. Often, it is printed on the back of the title page. This tells you when the book was published. If you need up-to-date research, this is important. Look for books with recent copyright dates.

Preface, Foreword, or Introduction

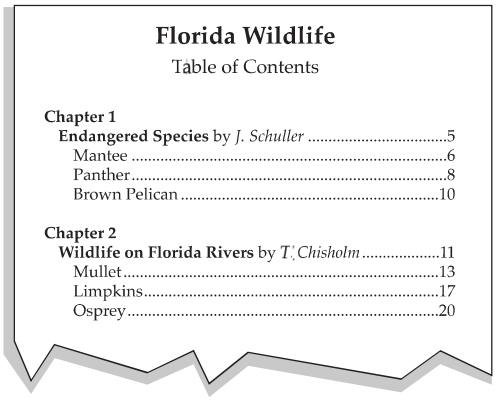
One or more of these often come next. In a *preface*, *foreward*, or *introduction* you can find the following:

- information about why the book was written
- acknowledgements: thank-you's to people who have been helpful.

Table of Contents

The *table of contents* tells you the following:

- titles/names of chapters or book sections
- page numbers where these begin.



Florida Wildlife

Table of Contents

Chapter 1
Endangered Species by *J. Schuller* 5
Mantee 6
Panther 8
Brown Pelican 10

Chapter 2
Wildlife on Florida Rivers by *T. Chisholm* 11
Mullet 13
Limpkins 17
Osprey 20

Body

The *body* is the main text of the book.

Appendix

An *appendix* sometimes follows the body. Here you will find extra material that helps you understand the text. You might find the following:

- maps, tables, or charts
- copies of letters or official documents
- other special material.

Glossary

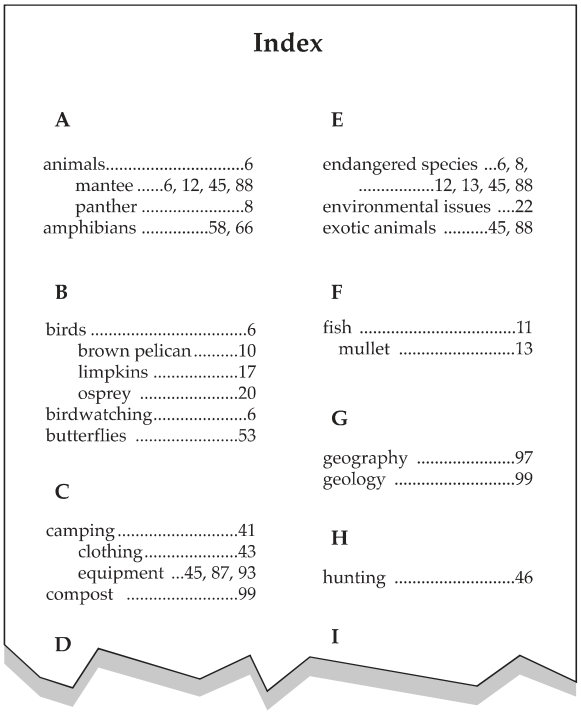
A *glossary* sometimes is included. This is a type of dictionary. It lists and defines words used in the text.

Bibliography

A *bibliography* often is included. This is a list of materials about the same subject.

Index

The *index* appears at the end of the book. This is a listing of important topics found in the book. The index is given in alphabetical order. The index also lists the page number(s) where the topic appears.



Index

A

animals.....6
mantee 6, 12, 45, 88
panther 8
amphibians 58, 66

B

birds 6
brown pelican.....10
limpkins 17
osprey 20
birdwatching.....6
butterflies 53

C

camping.....41
clothing.....43
equipment ...45, 87, 93
compost 99

D

E

endangered species ...6, 8, ...12, 13, 45, 88
environmental issues 22
exotic animals 45, 88

F

fish 11
mullet 13

G

geography 97
geology 99

H

hunting 46

I

Checking a Dictionary

A dictionary is the best source for finding word meanings. One word of caution: words often have more than one meaning. Read them all. Dictionary entries are arranged in alphabetical order. The following will be helpful as you use a dictionary.

Guide Words. *Guide words* are at the top of each page. They list the first and last words found on a page.

Entry Words. *Entry words* are the words being defined. They are listed in bold print. Entry words appear in alphabetical order.

Syllable Divisions. *Syllable divisions* show where each word can be properly divided into syllables.

Parts of Speech Labels. Labeling the different *parts of speech* of a word shows you all the ways a word can be used. For example, you will find out if the word can be used as a verb or noun. Often words can be used more than one way.

Pronunciations. *Pronunciations* respell words phonetically. This means they spell them the way they sound.

Spelling and Capital Letters. Often a word can be spelled more than one way. The dictionary shows this. If an entry is capitalized, you should *capitalize* it by using an uppercase letter.

Illustrations. *Illustrations* are sometimes provided. An illustration could be a picture or diagram used to make the definition clearer.

Accent Marks. *Accent marks* show which syllable should be stressed when you say a word.

Synonyms. *Synonyms* are words with similar meanings.

Antonyms. *Antonyms* are words with opposite meanings.

Etymology. *Etymology* is the history of the word. A word's history may trace the origin of the word and tell which languages it came from. This information is placed in brackets.

Pronunciation Key. The *pronunciation key* explains the symbols used to help you pronounce the words.

Example Dictionary Page

Dictionary Page

Guide words

Entry word

grid•dle (grĭd′l) n. A heavy, flat metal plate with a handle used for cooking. [ME *gridel*, gridiron < ONFr. *gredil* < Lat. *craticula*, dim. of *cratis*, hurdle, lattice.]—**grid′dle** *v.*

Syllable divisions

grid•i•ron (grid′ĭ′ərn) *n.* **1.** Football. **a.** The field of play **b.** The game itself. **2.** A metal structure high above the stage of a theater, from which ropes or cables are strung to scenery and lights. **3.a**. A flat framework of parallel metal bars for broiling food. **b.** An object resembling a griddle. [ME *gridirne*, alteration of *gridere*, alteration of *gridel*. See GRIDDLE.]

Definition with two closely related meanings

grid•lock (grĭd′lŏk′) *n.* **1.** A traffic jam in which no vehicular movement is possible. **2.** A complete lack of movement or progress. —**grid′lock′** *v.* —**grid′locked′** *adj.*

Pronunciation

grief (grēf) *n.* **1.** Deep sorrow; great sadness. **2.** A source of deep mental anguish, cause or source of sorrow. **3.** Archaic. A grievance. [ME < OFr. < grever, to harm. See GRIEVE.]

Spelling and capital letters

Grier (grîr), **Robert Cooper**, 1794-1870. Amer. jurist; associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1846-70).

Accent mark

griev•ance (grē′vəns), *n.* **1.a.** A circumstance seen as just cause for protest. **b.** A complaint or protestation based on a grievance. **2.** Indignation or resentments stemming from feeling wronged. [ME *grevaunce* < OFr. *grevance* < *grever*, to harm. See GRIEVE.]

Parts of speech (principle parts of the verb)

grieve (grēv), *v.* **grieved**, **griev•ing**, **grieves**.—*vt.* **1.** To cause grief or sorrow to. **2.** To feel or express grief.

Etymology

[ME greven, to harm < Lat. gravare, to burden < gravis, heavy.]

Synonyms

Syns: *grieve*, *lament*, *mourn*.

Antonyms

Ant: *rejoice*

griddle

G

Pronunciation key

ă	fat	o͝o	foot
ā	day	ŭ	fun
âr	care	ûr	urge
ä	barn	th	thin
ĕ	bet	th	this
ĭ	bit	hw	which
ō	note	zh	usual
ô	more		

ˈ primary
ˌ secondary

331

Responding to What you Read

Understanding the material you read is a huge part of the reading process. However, so is showing that you understand it. You do this by responding to the material. You can do this in several ways: by answering questions, by drawing an illustration showing how it makes you feel, and by writing a **summary** of the material. In this section, you will respond to what you are reading by summarizing information and evaluating the material.

Summarizing Information

A *summary* is a short piece of writing that relates the main points of a longer selection. Writing summaries will help you find and understand these main points. Reviewing the summary later will help you prepare for tests.

You will use two important skills to write a summary. First, you must understand what you read. Then, you must organize the most important information facts. The following steps will help you prepare your summary.

1. **Gather and organize information.**

   - Read the passage twice. Look carefully at all of the following:

     a. titles and subheadings
     b. words in italics or bold print
     c. the first sentence of each paragraph.

   - Learn unfamiliar words. Write them down. Look them up. Read over the definitions carefully. Make sure you understand them.

   - Read the passage again.

   - Determine the main idea. What idea do all the details support or discuss? Write down the main idea in your own words.

   - Determine essential information. What details can you remove and still understand the passage? What details must remain? Those that remain are essential. You can usually omit examples, stories, and words in parentheses.

   - Write down details about essential information. Again, use your own words as much as possible.

- Note the method used to present information. Is it in chronological order? Does it compare and contrast? You will need to keep your notes in this same organization.

2. **Write your first draft.**

- Use only the notes you have taken. Do not look back at the selection. Turn the phrases of your notes into complete sentences. Again, use your own words.

- It is important to organize your summary correctly. Use the same method used in the selection. Changing the organization can change the meaning.

3. **Revise your first draft.**

- Read your draft carefully. It is a very good idea to read it aloud. Ask yourself the following questions:

  a. Have I stated the main idea? Is it clear and easy to understand?
  b. Have I included all essential information?
  c. Have I omitted nonessential information?
  d. Is it clear how the details support the main idea?
  e. Did I use the correct order of details?
  f. Did I use my own words?

- Compare your summary to the selection. A good summary should be about one-quarter the length of the selection. Is it too short? You have probably left out essential details. Is it too long? You have probably included nonessential details.

- Add details if you need to. Omit details if you need to.

4. **Finalize your draft.**

- Check your summary for spelling. Make sure you have used correct punctuation and capitalization. Then write or type a neat final copy.

- Before you submit your summary, read it again. Read it aloud. You can often *hear* errors you would miss in a silent reading.