

Using Reference Materials to Check Spelling

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

When you are unsure how to spell a word — or which spelling is correct — use a reference tool. A **DICTIONARY** shows the correct spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of words. A **GLOSSARY** in the back of a textbook defines key terms used in that book. A **THESAURUS** lists synonyms and antonyms (it is for word choice, not spelling). Spell-check on a computer can catch many misspellings but cannot tell you which homophone is right ('to', 'too', 'two'), so always reread your writing. When using a printed dictionary, use the **GUIDE WORDS** at the top of the page to find the right page, and remember that entries are in alphabetical order.

PRACTICE

Choose the best answer.

1. A student is unsure how to spell the word *occurrence*. Which reference would BEST help her check the spelling?
 - A. a thesaurus
 - B. a dictionary
 - C. an atlas
 - D. an encyclopedia
2. The guide words at the top of a dictionary page are *flood* and *foam*. Which of the words below would be found on this page?
 - A. flake
 - B. fold
 - C. fountain
 - D. flower
3. Which list of words is in correct alphabetical order?
 - A. mountain, motor, mouse, move
 - B. motor, move, mountain, mouse
 - C. motor, mountain, mouse, move
 - D. mouse, motor, mountain, move



4. You see the word *bark* in this sentence: 'The rough bark of the oak tree felt scratchy.' Which dictionary meaning of *bark* fits?
- A. the outer covering of a tree
 - B. the short, sharp sound a dog makes
 - C. a small sailing ship
 - D. to speak in a loud, harsh voice
5. Which reference book is BEST for finding a SYNONYM (a word with almost the same meaning) for the word *important*?
- A. a dictionary
 - B. an atlas
 - C. an encyclopedia
 - D. a thesaurus
6. Mira typed: 'I went to the store to *by* milk.' Spell-check did NOT underline the word *by*. What is the BEST way to catch this kind of mistake?
- A. ignore it; spell-check is always right
 - B. reread the sentence carefully and check that each word is the right word
 - C. type the sentence again and hope for a different result
 - D. ask a friend to retype it
7. You are reading a science textbook and don't know the word *photosynthesis*. Where in the book should you look FIRST?
- A. the title page
 - B. the index
 - C. the glossary
 - D. the table of contents
8. A dictionary entry shows: 'cou-ra-geous (k \blacksquare -r \blacksquare 'j \blacksquare s).' The mark ' after 'r \blacksquare ' tells you that:
- A. that syllable is stressed (said more strongly)
 - B. that syllable is silent
 - C. the word has more than one meaning
 - D. the word is borrowed from another language
9. Sasha wants to find the EXACT current spelling and meaning of a brand-new technology word. Which reference is BEST?
- A. a printed dictionary from 1995
 - B. a thesaurus
 - C. an atlas
 - D. a current online dictionary



10. Name the reference tool that BEST fits each task: (a) check the spelling of a word, (b) find a word with the same meaning as 'happy', (c) look up where the country Kenya is located, (d) find facts about the scientist Marie Curie.

Answer: _____



Answer Keys

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D

- 6 A B C D
- 7 A B C D
- 8 A B C D
- 9 A B C D
- 10

Explanations

1. B	A dictionary gives the correct spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of a word. A thesaurus lists synonyms (for word choice), an atlas has maps, and an encyclopedia has articles about topics — none of those are the right tool to check a spelling.
2. D	Guide words show the FIRST and LAST entries on the page, and entries are in alphabetical order. 'Flower' (f-l-o-w) comes after 'flood' (f-l-o-o) and before 'foam' (f-o-a). 'Flake' comes before 'flood' (earlier page). 'Fold' and 'fountain' both come after 'foam' (later page).
3. C	Compare letter by letter: motor (mot-) → mountain (moun-) → mouse (mous-) → move (mov-). After 'mo', the next letters go t, u, u, v. Between 'mountain' and 'mouse' the 4th letter is n then s. Only C is in correct order.
4. A	Use CONTEXT clues: 'rough', 'oak tree', and 'scratchy' all point to the meaning 'the outer covering of a tree.' The other meanings of 'bark' are real dictionary entries, but they do not fit this sentence.
5. D	A thesaurus is built for finding synonyms (and antonyms). A dictionary tells you what a word means and how to spell it. An atlas has maps. An encyclopedia has articles about topics.
6. B	Spell-check only flags words that are not in its word list. 'By' is a real word, so spell-check leaves it alone — even though Mira meant 'buy'. The only reliable way to catch a wrong-word/homophone mistake is to reread your writing carefully.
7. C	A glossary is a mini-dictionary at the back of a textbook that defines the key terms used in that book — exactly what you need for an unfamiliar science word. The index lists page numbers, and the table of contents lists chapters — neither gives a definition.
8. A	In a pronunciation respelling, the mark ' after a syllable shows which syllable is STRESSED — the one you say a little louder and stronger (cou-RA-geous). Silent syllables, multiple meanings, and word origin are shown in different parts of the entry.
9. D	A current online dictionary is updated as new words enter the language, so it will have the newest spellings and meanings. A 1995 dictionary is too old. A thesaurus gives synonyms, not new spellings. An atlas has maps.
10.	Answer: (a) dictionary; (b) thesaurus; (c) atlas; (d) encyclopedia. Each tool has a specific purpose: a dictionary checks spelling and meaning; a thesaurus lists synonyms; an atlas shows maps and locations; an encyclopedia has articles about people, places, and topics.

