



## Geography Skills Handbook

Five Themes of Geography .....	SSH1
Using Maps and Globes.....	SSH2
Physical Maps .....	SSH4
Elevation Maps .....	SSH5
Human and Physical Characteristics of Regions.....	SSH6
Historical Maps .....	SSH7
Special-Purpose Maps.....	SSH8



## Writing Workshop

Keys to Good Writing .....	SSH10
Opinion Writing .....	SSH11
Informative Writing .....	SSH12
Narrative Writing .....	SSH13
Using a Library Media Center to Write a Research Paper....	SSH14
Researching on the Internet .....	SSH14



## Using Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary Sources .....	SSH15
Secondary Sources .....	SSH16
How to Interpret Primary Sources .....	SSH17
How to Interpret Secondary Sources .....	SSH19




# Geography Skills Handbook

## Five Themes of Geography

### Vocabulary

region  
landform  
climate

Geography is the study of Earth. Your study of geography can be guided by five themes: Location, Place, Human/Environment Interaction, Movement, and Region. These themes help you understand the wide variety of places found on Earth. Each theme reveals something different about a place.

1.  **Reading Check** **Identify** and use the compass rose to list two states that are north of Colorado.



### Where can Washington be found within the West region?

A **region** is an area that shares physical or human characteristics. Washington is located in the northern and western part of the West region. It is next to the Pacific Ocean.

## Place



### How is this area different from others?

The United States includes a variety of landforms and bodies of water. A **landform** is a natural feature of the Earth. Many people enjoy time at beaches and coastal areas such as this beach in Georgia.

## Human/Environment Interaction



### How have people changed the place?

In the 1800s, people built canals to connect cities to rivers or lakes. Canals changed the land and made it easier to move people and goods. The Indiana Central Canal helped Indianapolis, Indiana, grow. Today, canals may be used to enjoy the outdoors.

## Movement



### How has movement changed a region?


Movement describes how and why people move from one place to another. The highways around New York City are often clogged with cars and trucks. People drive cars to get to work, school, and other places. Trucks deliver food and other goods from one place to another.

## Region



### What else is special about a region?

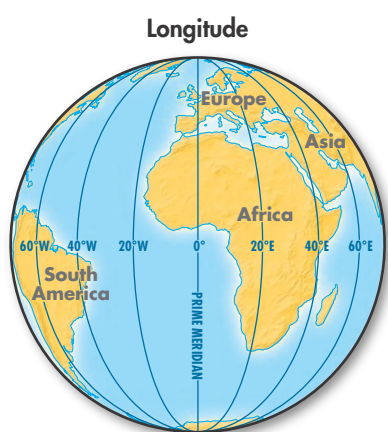
California's redwood trees can grow to over 320 feet tall. They are the tallest trees on Earth and are found near the coast in northern California. The climate in northern California is cool and wet. **Climate** is the usual weather pattern in a place over a period of time.

2.  **Reading Check** Discuss with a partner the place where you live. **Describe** each of the themes of geography in your discussion.

## Using Maps and Globes

People use globes and maps to learn about the world. A **globe** is a model of Earth, so it is shaped like a sphere. It is useful for looking at the entire world. A globe shows the continents and the oceans as they really are.

Flat maps, such as those in this text, offer a different view of Earth. Flat maps of Earth are less accurate than globes because they need to stretch out some parts of the world to make them flat. This is called distortion. Still, there are advantages to flat maps. Flat maps fold or can be mounted to walls. They are also useful for looking at smaller areas such as a single country, state, or city.




The **equator** is the imaginary line that extends around the center of Earth. It is marked as 0 degrees latitude.

**Latitude** lines are evenly spaced and extend around the globe both north and south of the equator. **Longitude** lines are evenly spaced lines that extend north and south between the North Pole and the South Pole. The **prime meridian** is the line of longitude marked as 0 degrees. Other lines of longitude are measured in degrees east or west of the prime meridian. Longitude and latitude are used to tell a place's absolute location. The **absolute location** is the exact location of a place, and it does not change. For example, Los Angeles is 34 degrees north of the equator and 118 degrees west of the prime meridian. The absolute location of Los Angeles is written as 34° N, 118° W.

The equator divides Earth into northern and southern hemispheres. The prime meridian and the 180-degree line opposite it, divide Earth into eastern and western hemispheres. Each **hemisphere** is half of the sphere.

**Relative location** describes where a place is in relation to another place. For example, you might say that the library is across from the police station. A city may grow based on its relative location to a river or trade route.

3.  **Reading Check** Look at a map of New York. Use the lines of latitude and longitude to **determine** the absolute location of Syracuse. \_\_\_\_\_



## Vocabulary

globe  
equator  
latitude  
longitude  
prime meridian  
absolute location  
hemisphere  
relative location

Different kinds of maps give different kinds of information. Political maps show information such as the location of state capitals and other cities. Look at the political map of the United States and find each of these map tools.

**Title:** The title tells you what the map shows.

**Map legend:** The map legend defines the symbols used on the map.

**Symbol:** A symbol is a mark or color that represents something.

**Scale:** The scale on the map shows distance. There are three scales on this map. Think about why that is so.

**Compass rose:** A compass rose shows directions on a map.

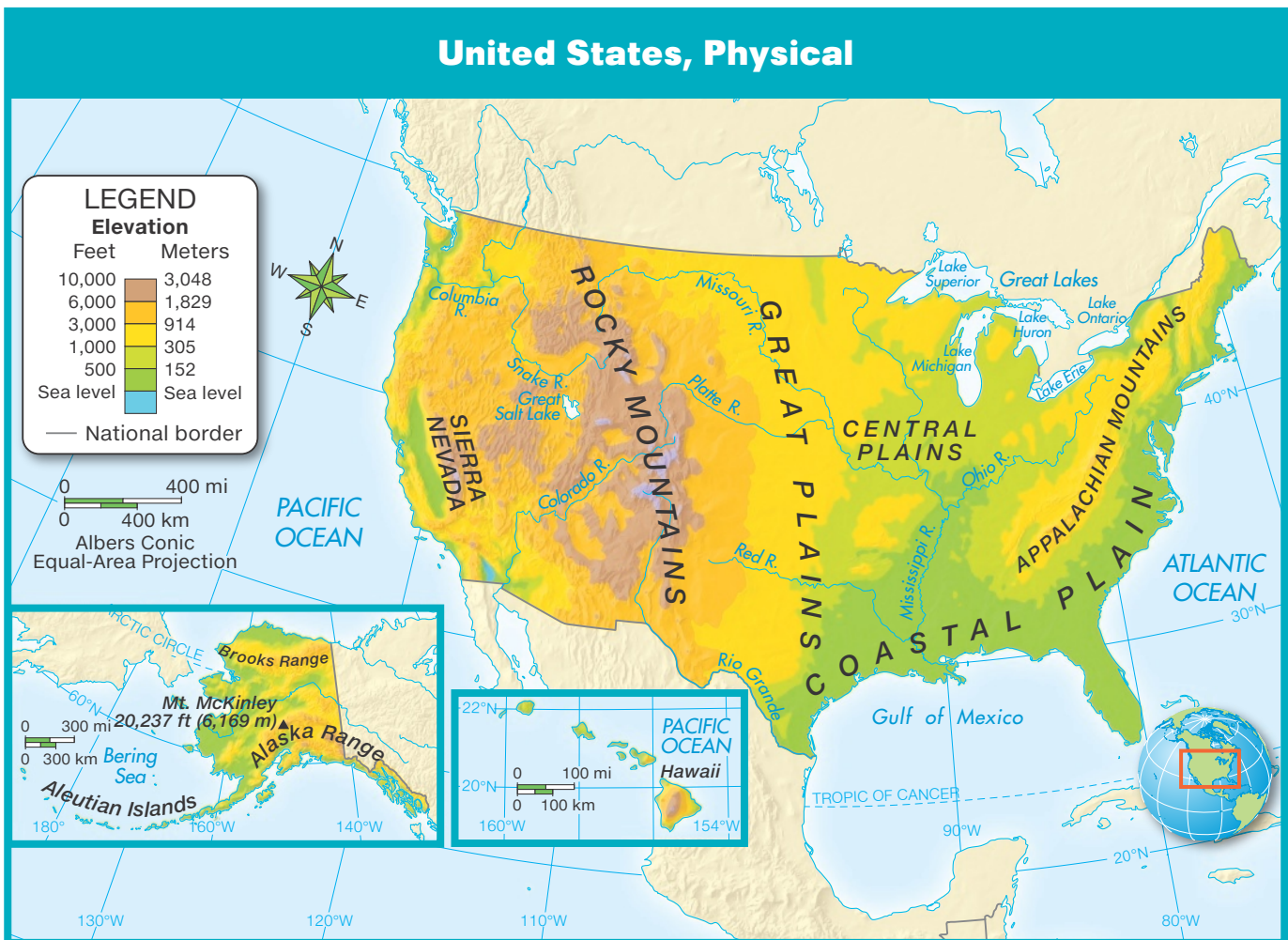


- ✓ Reading Check** **Locate** the states that share a border with Mexico. Circle these on the map.
- ✓ Reading Check** Work with a partner. **Ask** each other questions about the location of the 50 states and the names of their capitals.

## Physical Maps

A **physical map** shows information such as landforms and bodies of water. A **landform** is a physical feature such as a mountain, desert, or valley. Bodies of water can include rivers, lakes, and oceans.

A physical map also shows the **relief** of an area. Relief shows high and low places by using different colors and shading. The elevation or height of the land above sea level is shown in color on the map. Shading is used to show landforms, such as mountain peaks. A **plain** is an open area of flat land.



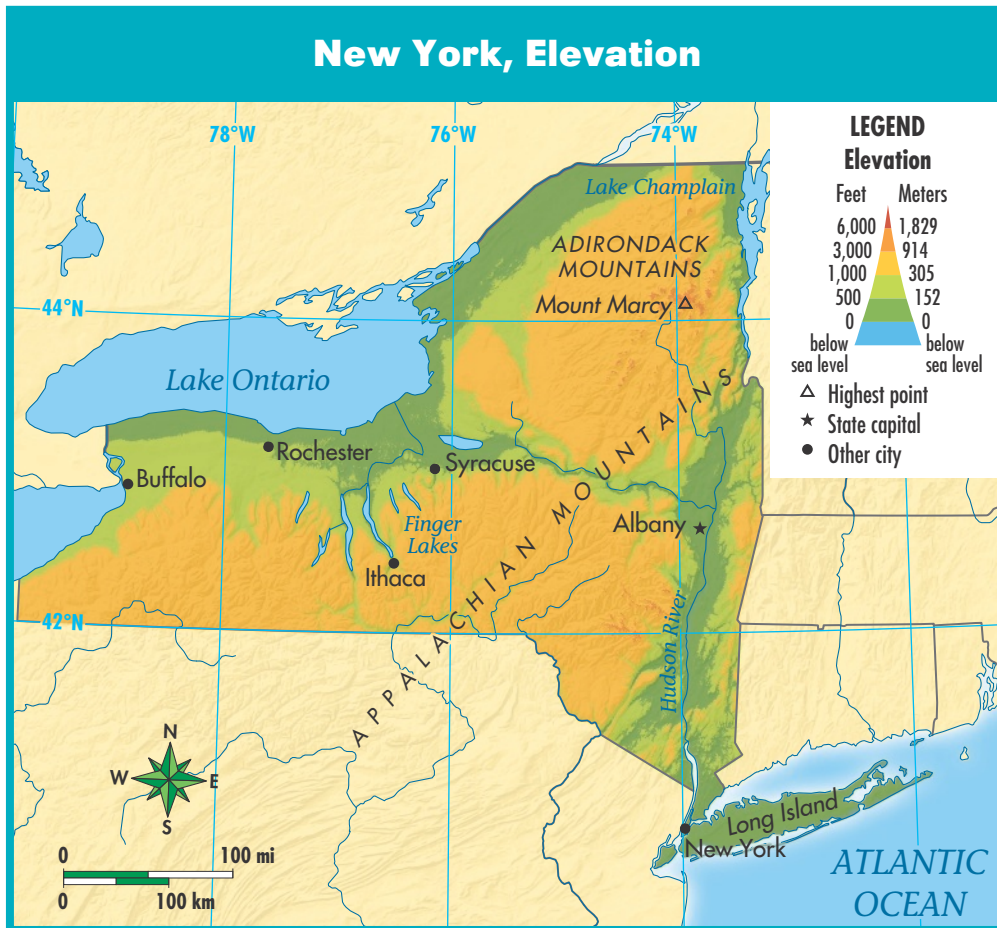
6. ☒ **Reading Check** What mountain range shown on the map would people have to cross when traveling from the Great Plains to California?
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## Elevation Maps

**Elevation** is the distance or height of land above sea level. An **elevation map** allows you to compare and contrast the elevations of different areas. For example, you can compare the elevation of a mountain range to the elevation of a valley or plain. This map uses different colors to show changes in elevation in the state of New York.

## Vocabulary

physical map  
landform  
relief  
plain  
elevation  
elevation map



7. **✓ Reading Check** **Identify** which landform in New York has the highest elevation. Then **identify** an area of the state that has one of the lowest elevations.

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## Human and Physical Characteristics of Regions

A **regions map** shows areas that share similar physical or human characteristics. Regions may result from patterns of human activity, such as population or economic activity. They might be areas that share similar physical characteristics, such as vegetation, landforms, or climate. The map below shows five regions of the United States.



8. ☒ **Reading Check** Identify which states are in the same region as Utah. Circle them on the map.
9. ☒ **Reading Check** Make a list of the physical and human characteristics that make your state unique.

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## Historical Maps

A **historical map** shows a particular time from the past. It is important when studying a historical map to notice the date or dates on the map. Historical maps can help you understand how places have changed over time.

This map shows the United States in 1850. During this time, the United States had expanded from the East Coast to the West Coast. Notice that the map also shows free and slave states. The balance between states that allowed slavery and those that did not, divided the U.S. Congress.

### Vocabulary

regions map

historical map



10. **✓ Reading Check** Summarize the location of the slave states and the location of the free states.

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## Special-Purpose Maps

A special-purpose map gives information related to a certain theme. For example, a drought map, like the maps of California on this page, shows if there is a drought and how severe it is. A **drought** is a long period of low rainfall. In a drought, plants and animals can suffer. People may have to take extra steps to save water. Drought maps change over time as rainfall increases and decreases. The two maps below show how drought levels have changed between the years 2006 and 2016.

A map of drought conditions in 2017 would look very different from drought shown on the 2016 map. In the winter of 2017, unusually large amounts of rainfall in parts of California caused flooding and mudslides. Dams overflowed as rain filled lakes and reservoirs.

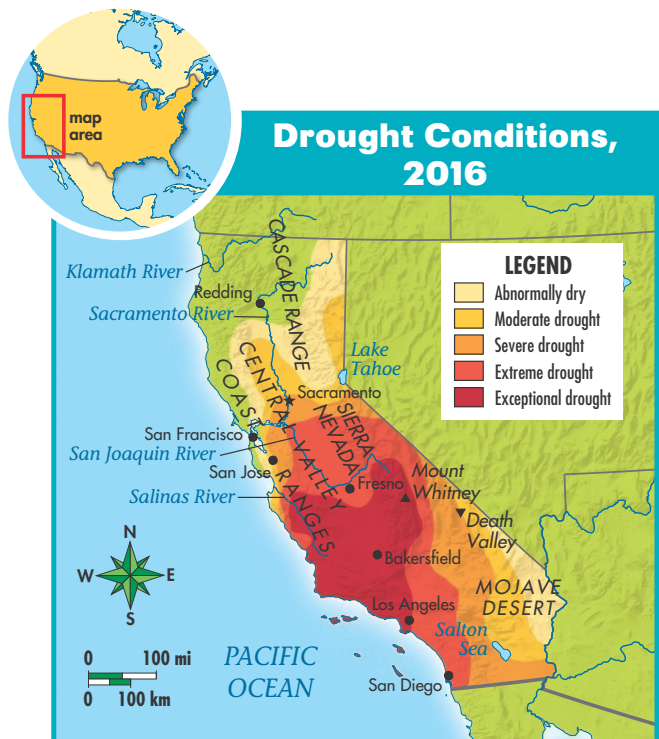
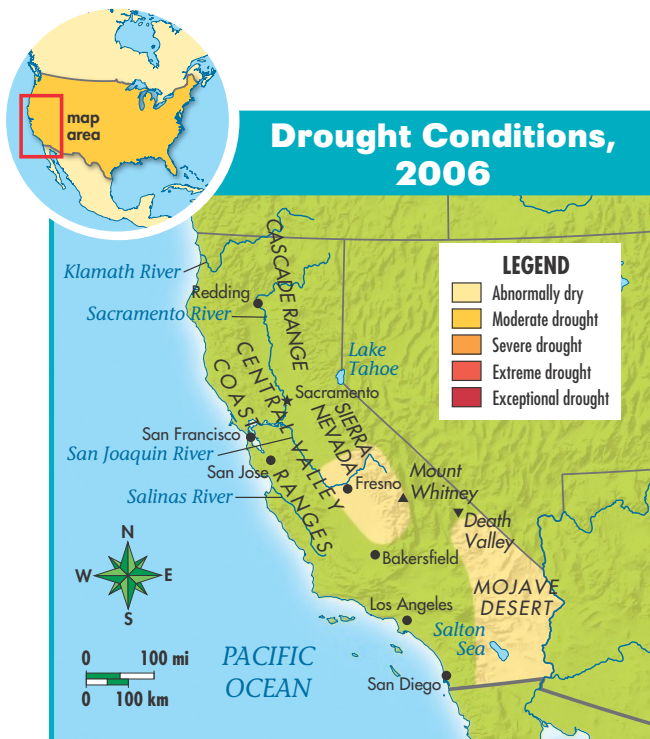
11.  **Reading Check** What is the level of drought for your community in 2006? What is shown in 2016? Are there any changes?

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Some special-purpose maps are related to current events.

**Current events** are events that are in the news. The outcome of a current event such as an election can more easily be seen on a map such as the one below. The map legend helps you know what the colors represent.

## Vocabulary

drought

current events



12. **Reading Check** Summarize what is shown on the election map.

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# Writing Workshop

## Keys to Good Writing

Good writers follow five steps when they write.

<b>Plan</b> ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Think about how to write about a topic.</li><li>• Find details about the topic.</li><li>• Take notes from sources.</li><li>• Write down your sources.</li><li>• Plan how to use the details.</li></ul>
<b>Draft</b> ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Write down all of your ideas.</li><li>• Think about which ideas go together.</li><li>• Put ideas that go together in groups.</li><li>• Write a sentence for the introduction and write a sentence for the conclusion.</li></ul>
<b>Revise</b> ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review what you wrote.</li><li>• Check that your ideas and organization make sense.</li><li>• Add time-order words and transitions (words and phrases such as <i>because</i> or <i>for example</i>).</li><li>• List any more sources that you used.</li></ul>
<b>Edit</b> ↓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check for correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.</li><li>• Make a final copy.</li></ul>
<b>Share</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use technology to print or publish your work.</li><li>• Make sure that you list all of your sources.</li></ul>

1.  **Reading Check** **Sequence** How might completing these steps out of order affect your writing?

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Christopher Columbus

There are three main writing genres—opinion, informative, and narrative. They all have a different purpose for writing.

## Opinion Writing

When you write an opinion piece, you are sharing your point of view on a topic. Your goal should be to make your viewpoint clear and to support it with evidence, or facts. Read the steps and sample sentences below to see how to write effective opinion pieces.

1

### Introduce the topic.

*Christopher Columbus landed in the Americas in 1492 after thinking he had reached Asia.*

2

### State your opinion.

*I think Christopher Columbus made a good decision when he chose to leave Spain in search of a western route to Asia.*

3

### Support your opinion with reasons and evidence.

*The trade routes on land were long and dangerous. Columbus sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in 1492 in search of a shorter and faster route to Asia.*


4

### Make sure that your ideas are clear, organized, and written in a logical way to support your purpose.

5

### Support your opinion statement with a conclusion.

*Columbus did not find the western route to Asia he had hoped for. Yet he made history by being one of the first Europeans to land in the Americas.*

2.  **Reading Check** **Analyze** Answer this question with a partner: Why must you use evidence to support a point of view in opinion writing?

## Informative Writing

Informative writing is also called explanatory writing, because you are writing to explain a topic to your reader. Reliable sources are important to use in this kind of writing. Make sure to avoid plagiarism. This means using someone else's words without giving that person credit. Take notes on your sources, including what they say and where you found them. Keep in mind that your reader may know nothing about the topic. Try to be clear and thorough in your writing. Read the steps and sample sentences below.



Pilgrims' landing  
of the *Mayflower*

1

### Introduce the topic.

*The 13 British colonies were started for different reasons.*

2

### Develop the topic with facts, details, definitions, and concrete details.

*The 13 British colonies were set up in North America between the early 1600s and the early 1700s. A colony is a settlement that is far away from the country that rules it.*

3

### Support your writing with a quotation if possible.

*Some colonies were founded so that people could worship freely. As William Penn explained, "No people can be truly happy . . . if abridged [shortened] of the freedom of their conscience [inner voice]."*

4


### Use precise language and content words.

*In contrast, other colonies were founded for economic reasons. John Rolfe discovered that tobacco grew well in Virginia's soil and it soon became a cash crop for the colony.*

5

### Write a conclusion that supports your introduction.


*Britain's 13 colonies were settled for religious, economic, and political reasons.*

3.  **Reading Check** **Infer** Discuss with a partner why it is important to use facts and details from reliable sources.

## Narrative Writing

When you write a narrative piece, you are telling a story, whether it is about a real or imagined event or experience. In this type of writing, you want to show, rather than tell, what happened. You can do this by using sensory words, which describe what a person sees, hears, touches, tastes, or smells. You want the reader to be able to visualize, or see, what you are describing. The events in your narrative should be clear, connected, and unfold in a natural way. Read the steps and sample sentences below.

1	<b>Introduce the story and characters.</b> <i>Kai hid behind the willow tree and watched as the settlers chopped down trees. She ran back to the village to tell her father that people were cutting down their trees.</i>
2	<b>Use dialogue and descriptive words.</b> <i>Kai asked, "Father, why did the settlers come here? They aren't sharing the land." The settlers looked weary and weakened, as they had been traveling in a rickety wagon for four long weeks.</i>
3	<b>Strengthen your writing with sensory words.</b> <i>Kai breathed in the freshness of the cool, autumn air and held on tightly to the straw that she was using to weave a basket.</i>
4	<b>Write a strong conclusion to close the narrative.</b> <i>Kai knew that her life would change once more settlers moved to the area. But for now she focused on the traditions that she had learned so that she could keep them alive.</i>

4.  **Reading Check Summarize** Answer this question with a partner: Why do you think the events or experience of a narrative need to unfold in a natural way?

## Using a Library Media Center to Write a Research Paper

When you are writing a research paper, it is helpful to use the resources available in your Library Media Center. To use them effectively, make sure that you:

- use different kinds of print and digital sources and make sure they are reliable.
- compare the information you find in sources.
- take notes by summarizing or paraphrasing content from your sources.
- ask a librarian for help if you are unsure what sources to use for your topic.

**Follow these steps to write a research paper:**

1. Write down two or three questions to guide your research.
2. Use reliable sources to do your research and answer the questions. Revise the questions if needed.
3. Based on the answers to your questions, organize your topic. If your topic is broad, narrow it or consider focusing on different aspects of the topic.
4. Write a thesis statement based on your research and evidence. This will become your introduction.
5. Use evidence in the form of details, examples, and quotes to support your thesis statement.
6. Use transitions and clauses to connect your ideas.
7. Write a strong conclusion that relates back to your thesis statement.
8. Make a list of your sources.

## Researching on the Internet

Not all sites are safe to use for research on the Internet. Look for Web sites with .org, .edu, or .gov, which have reliable content. Content from sites that end in .com cannot necessarily be trusted. If you do use them, check one or two other sources from reliable sites. Just like you should look for credible sources when using library books, you should use the same type of inquiry when you look for information on the Internet.

### 5. **Reading Check**

**Draw Conclusions** Why is it important to check more than one source when you are gathering information to write a research paper?

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# Using Primary and Secondary Sources

## Vocabulary

primary source  
autobiography  
artifact  
secondary source  
biography

## Primary Sources

Have you ever used a journal or diary to write down something you witnessed? Perhaps you saw an exciting sporting event or went on a trip with your family. If you wrote about those events or took pictures, then you have created a primary source based on events in your life. Read to find out what a primary source is and how historians use primary sources.

A **primary source** is one made or written by a person who witnessed an event. Primary sources help us learn about events or historical periods from people who lived during that time. Primary sources can be written, visual, or oral (spoken).

A historical document, like the United States Constitution, is an example of a written primary source. Letters, journals, and photographs are also primary sources. An **autobiography** is an account of a person's life written by that person. Because it is a firsthand, eyewitness account, an autobiography is a primary source.

Visual primary sources include artwork, maps, and architecture, which show us what people, places, and buildings look like now and in the past. An artifact is another visual primary source. **Artifacts** are objects made and used by people, like a soldier's uniform from the American Revolution. Oral primary sources include speeches, interviews, and recordings of events.



This uniform is a primary source. It is an artifact from the American Revolution.

1. **✓ Reading Check** If you have visited a museum, you have seen artifacts. **Identify** an artifact you saw at a museum.

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## Secondary Sources

Have you ever written a research report for school? If you have, you very likely used primary and secondary sources.

A **secondary source** is material that was written or created by someone who did not witness or experience an event firsthand.

A **biography** is a book about a person's life written by someone else. For example, if a historian today writes a biography on Abraham Lincoln, it is a secondary source since the writer was not present during Lincoln's life.

Secondary sources are important because they often analyze events, sometimes long after they have taken place. Some secondary sources offer readers new ideas or facts about people and events. This textbook is a secondary source. Encyclopedias, online or in print, are also secondary sources. Most reference materials, such as dictionaries and instruction manuals, are secondary sources. Books and magazine articles that were not written firsthand are secondary sources.

Like primary sources, secondary sources can be oral or visual. A radio program about Martin Luther King, Jr., or a historical film about the American Revolution are secondary sources. A painting created today showing a battle during the American Revolution is also a secondary source. Charts and graphs that interpret information are secondary sources because they are made from original data after events occur.

2.  **Reading Check** Describe the difference between primary and secondary sources.

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Encyclopedias are secondary sources.

## How to Interpret Primary Sources

One way to interpret, or understand, a primary source is to study the material or object, think about it, and then answer questions. It can also be helpful to compare and contrast primary sources that are about the same subject or event.

The next document is a primary source because it was written by Hernán Cortés, a Spanish explorer who defeated the Aztec empire and claimed a vast area in what is today Mexico for Spain. Moctezuma is the Aztec emperor.



Hernán Cortés

### Primary Source

...the inhabitants of this province would often caution [warn] me not to trust these vassals [servants] of Moctezuma for they were traitors, . . . and they warned me as true friends, and as persons who had long known those men, to beware of them.

—Hernán Cortés to King Charles V of Spain, *Second Letter*, 1520

3. **✓ Reading Check** Why do you think Cortés wrote this letter? If Cortés had written a letter to a friend how might it be different than one he wrote to the king?

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4. **Apply** Explain why this document is a primary source and not a secondary source.

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The next document is also a primary source. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, a soldier who was with Cortés during the conquest of Mexico, wrote an account of the event. Díaz del Castillo's account is considered the most complete description of these events that exists. Unlike the letters of Cortés, the book by Díaz was not written until 1568 when Díaz was 72 years old.

### Primary Source

They replied that they were the tax collectors of the great Moctezuma and . . . they now demanded twenty men and women to sacrifice to their god, Huitzilopochtli, so that he would give them victory over us, for they said that Moctezuma had declared that he intended to capture us and make us slaves.

-Bernal Díaz del Castillo,  
*The True History of the Conquest of New Spain*, 1576

5.  **Reading Check** **Compare** and **contrast** the similarities and differences between the authors' writings.

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## How to Interpret Secondary Sources

Your textbook has information about the Lewis and Clark expedition, but the information was not written by someone who was there in real time, like Cortés. This makes it a secondary source. The authors did not see or live through the events that are described. They learned their information by reading other people's writings or looking at other primary sources, like photographs, diaries, and artifacts. You can answer questions to interpret secondary sources just as you did with primary sources. Read the passage below from your textbook and answer the question that follows.



Lewis and Clark took along medals like this one to present to American Indian leaders along their route. The medal is a primary source.

Soon after the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson finalized plans for an expedition to explore the new lands. He asked Meriwether Lewis to lead the expedition. Lewis had worked as Jefferson's secretary. He was also an explorer and frontiersman.

Lewis asked a fellow frontiersman William Clark to go with him. Together, they put together the Corps of Discovery, a group of capable men who would take the nearly two-year journey to the Pacific Ocean. Jefferson was hoping that they would find a water route that would link the Mississippi with the Pacific Ocean. Such a route would provide access to the western part of the United States. Jefferson also wanted Lewis and Clark to learn about the American Indians who lived in the west, as well as bring back information about the land itself.

6. **✓ Reading Check** Compare the Cortés letter on the previous page to the textbook excerpt. How do they differ?

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