


Technology Feature Brief

Glossary

Glossary and dictionary features provide ways for readers to immediately gain an understanding of unfamiliar words. Readers can access definitions of words directly within the text. These embedded definitions can support readers' retention of information.


While both glossary and dictionary features provide definitions, they have some key differences. Glossary features highlight key words that are chosen based on the learning goal of the material. The definitions in a glossary can be customized to match how the word is being used in the text. Dictionary features allow users to look up any word, leaving it up to the reader to decide which words to look up. Dictionaries provide traditional definitions of the words, not contextualized ones like in a glossary.

The example shows a glossary entry, which includes the word, a contextually relevant definition, and a supporting image. Glossary entries can also include example sentences using the word in context, parts of speech, cognates, and more.



Nutrients

The substances in food that are important for energy, growth, development, and reproduction.



Clockwise: Carrots, rosemary, strawberries, bok choy, and walnuts.

Add to my glossary


After reading the book *Charlotte's Web*, 10-year-old Alia made a big decision. She decided she would not eat meat anymore. She did not want animals to be killed for food. Her story is not unique. Lately many children are choosing to be vegetarian.

Some people do not eat any beef, pork, fish, or other meats. Some people choose their meat-free diet for various reasons. Some choose this diet because of their concern for animals, and others because of their concern for the environment.

Research has linked to problems such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and increased rates of heart disease. By replacing meat with beans and nuts, vegetarians eat less saturated fat and higher in fiber than meat eaters.

Nonetheless, eating meat is a good way for people to get enough protein, iron, and vitamin B12, since it contains all of these nutrients. In contrast, vegetarians have to plan their meals carefully to get all their nutrients.

Some people say that meat doesn't just taste good; it is also part of the American way of life. A roasted turkey is symbolic of Thanksgiving.



Pork is a type of meat that comes from pigs. [details](#)

Research

- **Digital dictionaries may support children’s vocabulary development.** In a study of 288 children ages 4 to 6, researchers randomly assigned some children to use an ebook with a digital dictionary, and some children to use ink-and-paper books. The digital dictionary explained some words but not others. Compared to children who did not use the ebook, children who used the ebook showed greater gains in understanding the meaning of words included in the digital dictionary. The two groups had equivalent word-meaning scores for words that were in the ebook but not supported by the digital dictionary. This suggests that the dictionary, and not the ebook more broadly, led to improved understanding of word meanings.
[Korat & Shamir, 2012](#)
- **Digital dictionaries may improve learning outcomes for English language learners.**
 - A randomized study of 95 English learners found that participants retained more information when using an electronic English dictionary than when using a print English dictionary. Print vs. electronic dictionary formats did not affect participants' language reception or production.
[Dziemianko, 2017](#)
 - A study of 44 English learners ages 18-30 found that compared to using a paper dictionary, using a computerized dictionary shortened reading times, increased the number of words looked up, and increased vocabulary recall. Reading comprehension did not differ between the two dictionary types.
[Hamdi, 2015](#)

Related Guidelines

Glossary and dictionary features are related to existing guidelines and best practices, including the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines. Connections include:

- UDL Guidelines
 - [UDL Checkpoint 2.1](#): Clarify vocabulary and symbols
 - [UDL Checkpoint 3.1](#): Activate or supply background knowledge
 - [UDL Checkpoint 3.2](#): Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships
- To meet WCAG level AAA, definitions of “unusual” words or phrases (such as jargon and idioms) should be available ([WCAG 2.1 AAA Criterion 3.1.3](#)), as well as the expanded form of abbreviations ([WCAG 2.1 AAA Criterion 3.1.4](#))

Glossary & Dictionary Examples

Most [CAST products](#) include embedded glossaries and dictionary lookups. In addition, Raising the Floor has compiled a list of products that include glossary lookup on their page: [Retrieve a definition for any selected word from a glossary/online resource](#). Check out [Newsela](#) for an example of how definitions can be embedded in reading passages.



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