

Word Reference Sources

Glossary

1. a list of terms in a special subject, field, or area of usage, with accompanying definitions.
2. such a list at the back of a book, explaining or defining difficult or unusual words and expressions used in the text.

Dictionary

1. a book, optical disc, mobile device, or online lexical resource (such as Dictionary.com) containing a selection of the words of a language, giving information about their meanings, pronunciations, etymologies, inflected forms, derived forms, etc., expressed in either the same or another language; lexicon; glossary. Print dictionaries of various sizes, ranging from small pocket dictionaries to multivolume books, usually sort entries alphabetically, as do typical CD or DVD dictionary applications, allowing one to browse through the terms in sequence. All electronic dictionaries, whether online or installed on a device, can provide immediate, direct access to a search term, its meanings, and ancillary information: an unabridged dictionary of English; a Japanese-English dictionary.

2. a book giving information on particular subjects or on a particular class of words, names, or facts, usually arranged alphabetically: a biographical dictionary; a dictionary of mathematics.

Thesaurus

In general usage, a thesaurus is a reference work that lists words grouped together according to similarity of meaning (containing synonyms and sometimes antonyms), in contrast to a dictionary, which provides definitions for words, and generally lists them in alphabetical order. The main purpose of such reference works is to help the user “to find the word, or words, by which [an] idea may be most fitly and aptly expressed” – to quote Peter Roget, architect of the best known thesaurus in the English language.

Although including synonyms, a thesaurus should not be taken as a complete list of all the synonyms for a particular word. The entries are also designed for drawing distinctions between similar words and assisting in choosing exactly the right word. Unlike a dictionary, a thesaurus entry does not give the definition of words.

Online Encyclopedia

An encyclopedia is a type of reference work – a compendium holding a summary of information from either all branches of knowledge or a particular branch of knowledge. Encyclopedias are divided into articles or entries, which are usually accessed alphabetically by article name. Encyclopedia entries are longer and more detailed than those in most dictionaries. Generally speaking, unlike dictionary entries, which focus on linguistic information about words, encyclopedia articles focus on factual information to cover the thing or concept for which the article name stands.

On-line encyclopedias offer the additional advantage of being dynamic: new information can be presented almost immediately, rather than waiting for the next release of a static format, as with a disk- or paper-based publication. The 21st century has seen the dominance of wikis as popular encyclopedias, including Wikipedia among many others.