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You may not be aware of it, but you're always using what you know to help you understand what you're reading.

Suppose you're reading an article about planets. You may know a lot about planets and you may have seen pictures of them. Maybe you've visited a planetarium. You may know the names of several planets and a few facts about them. These things are your **prior knowledge**. (*Prior* means "before.") Prior knowledge helps you understand what you're reading.

As you read, ask yourself questions such as: "What do I know about this subject?" and "What do I think about when I look at the title and the pictures?" Then use this knowledge as you read.

Guided Practice

Read this selection. Use what you know to answer the questions that follow.

Echidnas are very interesting mammals. Instead of giving birth to live babies, they lay leather-like eggs. Then they put the eggs in pouches, where they stay for several weeks before hatching.

Platypuses and echidnas make up a special group of mammals called monotremes. They are the only two species of mammals that lay eggs.

Like porcupines, echidnas are covered with spines for protection. When facing danger, they go underground or roll into balls. Echidnas also have a long snout and a sticky tongue, just like an anteater. Both creatures use their snout and tongue to catch small insects. Echidnas mainly eat ants and termites. They can live as long as 50 years.

Echidnas live only in Australia and New Guinea. We can learn something about the past by studying these ancient mammals.



Which of the following is a mammal?

- A** a kangaroo
- B** a clown fish
- C** an iguana
- D** a rattlesnake

The article assumes you are familiar with mammals. Mammals are warm-blooded animals that feed their young with milk. In every case but monotremes, mammals give birth to live young. The correct answer is choice A.

An echidna lays leather-like eggs. Something else that might feel similar to the echidna's eggs is a

- A** bathing suit
- B** bedspread
- C** notebook
- D** wallet

You have seen or felt leather items before—perhaps a belt, shoes, or even a nice chair. Although some clothing is made of leather, a bathing suit would not be. A bedspread and a notebook would also not be made of leather. Choice D is correct.

Echidnas live only in Australia and New Guinea. Another country in that part of the world is

- A** Finland
- B** New Zealand
- C** Egypt
- D** Canada

You have some idea where Australia and New Guinea are—they are in the southern hemisphere. Finland, Egypt, and Canada are all in the northern hemisphere. Choice B is correct.



Now use what you know to answer the questions that follow this selection.

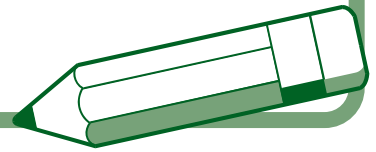
Back-to-School Night

Next Tuesday night, September 15th, from 7–8:30 p.m., will be Back-to-School Night at Pawshawma Middle School. Please plan to attend. You will hear an address from the principal, tour your student’s classroom, and meet your student’s teacher. This is an important way to connect with the school, so please make plans to attend.



Note that the school will not accommodate children that night. This is an adults-only event. Please make appropriate child care arrangements.

If you cannot come, please RSVP at the school’s Web site.



This selection is **best** described as

- A an invitation
- B an advertisement
- C a letter of complaint
- D a business thank-you note

An advertisement is an attempt to sell something. A letter of complaint addresses a negative situation. A business thank-you note is written in appreciation for a specific business situation. This is an invitation asking parents to attend Back-to-School Night. Choice A is correct.

To let the school know they are not attending, your parents would need

- A a stamp
- B a computer
- C a pay phone
- D an appointment

You know what a Web site is. To access a Web site, you need to access the Internet. You cannot use the Internet through the mail or on a pay phone. You also do not need an actual appointment. You would need a computer to RSVP. The correct answer is choice B.

