

## Vocabulary Focus: Developing Definitions

There is a great deal of vocabulary in Biology. A year of Biology has more new vocabulary terms than a year of a foreign language. Learning and being able to use scientific terms is necessary for success in this course. Never simply list the words in your notes or outlines. Without a definition you will not be able to master the term. Never (or only under extreme situations) use the glossary! The glossary is a crutch for the mind and should not be used unless you are trying to take a short cut and not really learn the term. The glossary uses no examples; the glossary makes no connections. No concept in Biology is simple enough to be completely explained (and therefore learned) in a single sentence! Use class notes and your textbook to find explanations of the terms. Using the index of a book will provide you with page numbers that will, in turn, provide you with examples and put the term into context (showing connections to other ideas). Using alternative resources on the Internet or in other reference books can do the same thing. *This goal is to create your own definition of the word custom made for your understanding.*

The internet can be a reliable source for information that you may not understand from a book or as a secondary resource to better explain and expand upon information discussed in class. Although our textbook provides the basic definitions of many of the terms we will use this year, it does not define all of those terms, nor does it provide the only/best explanation of those terms. The Internet can be a very valuable resource when studying. When using the internet to find definitions it is important to find the definition that is most appropriate for what you are studying.

Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/environment?s=t> can serve as an added resource for better understanding this course's vocabulary. When using dictionary.com make sure the dictionary tab is highlighted and simply type your term into the search bar. Dictionary.com will give you multiple definitions for the requested term. It is important to find the definition **most applicable** to our studies. In order to do this, you must skim the definitions provided and choose the one related to biology, or more specifically the specific topic we are studying in biology. On the back of this page are two screen shots; one for the term species and one for the word environment. Notice how the **best definition** for species is the one categorized under biology and the **best definition** for the term environment is listed under ecology.

Make sure you are on the **DICTIONARY** tab!

The screenshot shows the Dictionary.com website with the 'species' entry selected. The 'Dictionary' tab is circled in red. A red arrow points from the callout box to this tab. The definition of 'species' is also circled in red, with another red arrow pointing from the second callout box to it. The browser's address bar shows 'Plantjo...', 'Averet...', 'Qualit...', 'GQueu...', 'Googl...', 'Total...', 'totals...', 'f (2) Fac...', 'Yola', 'kyscho...', and 'Spe...'. The system tray at the bottom shows the date '5/31/2012' and time '8:05 AM'.

The definition of species associated with biology is the *best* definition since you are studying for biology class!

If looking up the definition for environment, the *best* definition would be the one having to do with ecology – because ecology is a branch of biology!!!

The screenshot shows the Dictionary.com website with the 'environment' entry selected. The definition of 'environment' is circled in red, with a red arrow pointing from the callout box to it. The browser's address bar shows 'www.pewtrusts.org/'. The system tray at the bottom shows the date '5/31/2012' and time '8:05 AM'.