

Support units: Professional practice  
Overview

## Teaching the concepts

Teaching and understanding concepts can be enriched by making connections to other concepts. For example, the concept of a montane moist forest is an entity in itself but it is also made up of epiphytes and tree frogs and the concept is further enriched when studied in a particular location, for example, in the Costa Rica Cloud Forests. A concept such as a 'mound' has been collectively built up in the mind through a familiarity with hedgehog mounds in Europe, the discovery of kames in glacial geomorphology, and the study of Tells in ancient Mesopotamia.

When exploring concepts it may be useful to emphasise the critical features of a concept and its recurring distinctive features. It may also be useful to distinguish 'non-examples' of a concept and 'irrelevant' or 'non-critical attributes'. For example, Bass Strait is clearly not an example of a lake; a lake's critical attributes are that it consists of a standing body of water, surrounded by land. Its non-critical attributes are muddy water and a rookery of pelicans. The concept of a lake can be enriched through the notion that, in geomorphological terms, lakes are only temporary features of the landscape.

In the **Australian Curriculum: Geography**

<<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale>> a progressive understanding of major concepts develops. In terms of sustainability in Year 1 students learn that environments need to be cared for by people, in Year 2 that the environment is the source of every material thing we use or consume, in Year 5 that environmental sustainability is about maintaining the ability of the environment, both locally and globally, to sustain human life and welfare into the future. In Year 10 it is about the immediate and underlying causes of environmental unsustainability. Again, teaching about these concepts is reliant on the vocabulary and grammar of geography, expressed in substantive geographical knowledge (facts) and procedural geographical knowledge (methods, skills and ways of obtaining new knowledge).