Maps can be used to show many different kinds of information. One of the main uses of maps is to show the locations of towns and cities. However, maps can also show where cotton is grown, cattle are raised, and where different species of wild animals are found. The possibilities are almost endless.

Often one map shows more than one kind of information. This means that some way must be used to help the person reading the map understand several kinds of information shown on the map. For example, if a map shows the locations of towns, roads, and parks, there must be some way to know which is which.

Using Map Legends

Maps use symbols to help the reader distinguish different kinds of information. The meaning of each symbol is explained in the map’s legend, or key. Each symbol used on the map is shown, along with an explanation of what the symbol means.

Look at Figure 1-8. What symbol is used to show the location of a city? What symbol is used to show the location of a city that is a state capital? What symbol is used to show the location of a park?

There can be many different symbols. Some maps show the kinds of products a state or country produces. Often these maps use picture symbols to show where goods are produced. For example, a small picture of an oil derrick (\(\text{\textcopyright}\)) may be used to show where oil is found. A picture of a sheep may be used to show where sheep are raised.
Look at Figure 1-9. What symbol shows where wheat is grown? What is grown where you see the symbol ( navigation symbol)?

Sometimes maps use colors or areas of shading as symbols. This is often used when the feature being shown covers a wide area. For example, Map 1-10 uses one color to show the area covered by the Amazon River basin. Population density maps use several colors to indicate different levels of population per square mile or kilometer. Here are some examples of shading: [shade patterns]. When you are reading a map that uses shading, you must be very careful to read the map correctly. It is easy to get shading like the following mixed up. [shade patterns].

If you have trouble telling such patterns apart, try this. Look at part of the map you wish to read. Then look at the legend and pick the pattern you think is correct. Cover the others with your fingers or a piece of paper. Look at the legend and then at the map. This should help you decide if you have picked the correct pattern.

### Using Your Skills

#### Practicing Map Skills

Use the map legends in Figures 1-8 and 1-9 to match each symbol below with its meaning.

1. _____ 1.  ![Wheat Symbol] ( )  a. wheat
2. _____ 2.  ![Airport Symbol] ( )  b. airport
3. _____ 3.  ![Corn Symbol] ( )  c. corn
4. _____ 4.  ![Oil Symbol] ( )  d. oil
5. _____ 5.  ![Railroad Symbol] ( )  e. railroad
6. _____ 6.  ![State Capital Symbol] ( )  f. state capital
PRACTICING MAP SKILLS

Use Map 1-10: The Amazon Basin and its legend to answer the questions that follow.

1. What covers most of the Amazon River basin?

2. In how many places in the Amazon River basin is gold found?

3. In what part of the Amazon River basin is coal found?

4. About how many miles apart are the deposits of tin in the Amazon River basin?

5. In what part of the Amazon River basin is oil found? Diamonds?