

**READ THE PASSAGE** Use visualization to help you understand the information.

### **The Air Up There**

The air surrounding Earth is the atmosphere. It is made mostly of two gases, nitrogen and the gas that we need, oxygen. Earth's gravity pulls on the gases and keeps the atmosphere close to the surface of Earth.

The atmosphere has the most gases at sea level, where the sea and land meet. As you go higher into the atmosphere, there are less gases. That means there is less oxygen to breathe. As a result, it is harder to breathe on a mountaintop than at a beach.

Outer space is where the atmosphere disappears. Astronauts who explore outer space wear special puffy suits that cover their heads and bodies. They look out of a clear window in the suit. The thick gloves are heated because space is very cold. The suits are white to reflect heat and to be seen easily against the dark background of space. Astronauts breathe oxygen from a tank on their backs. A spacesuit is a cozy atmosphere!

**SKILL PRACTICE** Read the item. Write your response.

1. What makes the atmosphere gases stay close to Earth's surface? Why is this important?

---

---

2. Where is the atmosphere thinner: 100 feet (30 m) above sea level or 2,000 feet (600 m) above sea level? How do you know?

---

3. Name two things that are missing from outer space.

---

**STRATEGY PRACTICE** Draw a picture that explains the second paragraph.