

Reference Sources

<i>Skills category</i>	Reference Sources
<i>Grade levels</i>	4th
<i>Time required</i>	10-15 minutes
<i>Objectives</i>	Students will be able to identify a variety of reference sources and become familiar with their usefulness in locating information.
<i>Materials needed</i>	Examples of an Almanac, a Dictionary, a Thesaurus, an Encyclopedia, and an Atlas. Activity pages copied for each student. Handout with definitions for the reference sources above. (Blackline masters included.) Word strip with the word “reference” printed on it.
<i>Preparation</i>	Arrange a display of the reference sources to be discussed. Copy handouts for each student. Prepare word strip “reference”
<i>Procedure</i>	“Reference sources are different from other books in the library. They are usually kept in a separate section in the library. “There are many books that give us information. Look at the word <i>reference</i> . (show your word strip) It begins with the root word, <i>refer</i> . Refer means to look at or direct attention to something. Reference books are used to “refer” to for information. They are not meant to be read from cover to cover. “Each different type of reference book provides specific information about a particular subject. “If you wanted to find your neighbor’s address and phone number, what kind of book would you use? (telephone book) A telephone book would be the <u>best</u> place to find the information. Could you find your friend’s address in the encyclopedia? (no) Although an encyclopedia has a lot of information on many subjects, it would not be a good source to find an address. You would be wasting your time trying to find what you needed. “Answers are often found in more than one book. One can save much time by first identifying the <i>best source</i> . The best source is the book <i>most likely</i> to contain the information you want.

(Show an example of each of the following reference books as you discuss them with the students.)

“One of the most commonly used reference books is a DICTIONARY. A simple definition of a dictionary would be *a book of words*. A dictionary will tell you many different things about a word. If you want to know about a word, the dictionary would be the best source to use.

“A book that also deals with words is a THESAURUS. A thesaurus is a book of synonyms. (Synonyms are words that mean the same thing.)

“Another widely used reference source is an ENCYCLOPEDIA. Encyclopedias give general information on people, places, things or events. Like many reference books, an encyclopedia is arranged in alphabetical order.

“An excellent reference book and a fun one to use is an ALMANAC. An almanac is published annually (every year). This makes an almanac one of the best sources for up-to-date information. Things like population of states or winners of recent awards would be listed in an almanac.

“Another valuable reference source is an ATLAS. An atlas is simply a book of maps. If the information you are looking for can be found on a map, then an atlas would be your best source. And, they’re also fun to look at.

“There are so many places to find information and we have seen some of the most common ones we use in school. Remember, you can save valuable time and energy by knowing which reference source will be THE BEST SOURCE for you to find the information you want.

“There are many other sources, including the Internet. Sometimes the internet is the best place to find information and sometimes it’s not. We want you to learn to become “wise” researchers, both in books and on the internet.”

Give each student the activity sheet and the handout with definitions for use in the classroom or at home.