

Using the Almanac

<i>Skills category</i>	Reference Sources / Almanacs
<i>Grade levels</i>	4th
<i>Time required</i>	15-20 minutes
<i>Objectives</i>	<p>Students will become acquainted with the many kinds of information contained in an almanac.</p> <p>Students will be able to find pieces of information in an almanac using the table of contents and the index.</p>
<i>Materials needed</i>	<p>A copy of <i>World Almanac</i> or <i>World Almanac for Kids</i> (or comparable books) Have one for at least every two students.</p> <p>Copies of any activity pages you have chosen to use. (activity sheets included)</p>
<i>Preparation</i>	<p>Prepare student handouts.</p> <p>Make any additional visual aids you may find useful.</p>
<i>Procedure</i>	<p>“An ALMANAC is simply a book of facts. An almanac contains up to date information about many topics, such as animals, cities and countries, inventions, sports, the planets and weather. Most are printed every year which makes them a good source of very current facts.</p> <p>“The word <i>almanac</i> is derived from a Greek word which means “calendar”. The earliest almanacs were calendars on which people kept track of astronomical, agricultural and weather data. People could refer to these calendars to know when to plant crops and what kind of weather patterns they might expect. They tracked the moon and its phases. Today almanacs contain vastly more information and many other subjects.</p> <p>“We have access to so much more information today. Five years ago, it was estimated that all the information known doubled every three years. Three years ago, it was said to double every 18 months. It is now estimated that all the information in the world doubles every 6 to 9 months. That is far, far too much information for even an “expert” in one’s field to memorize or begin to keep up with new and/or changing information.</p>

“It has become even more important for us to **know where to find information.** Almanacs can be an excellent source.

“An almanac will answer the questions ‘*who*’, ‘*what*’, ‘*where*’, ‘*when*’ and ‘*how many*’. It will **not** tell you ‘*how*’ to do anything or ‘*why*’ anything is like it is.

For example: It can tell you *who* eats the rice in the world. It can tell you *what* kind and *where* rice is grown. It can also tell you *when* the rice is harvested. It will tell you *how many* bushels and/or pounds are exported. It will not, however, tell you *how* to plant rice or *why* people buy or eat rice.

“Take a few moments to look through the almanac. Try to tell how the topics are organized. Find a section that is of particular interest to you. (Judge how long to have them browse by what time you have allotted for this lesson. Let the students share what they find with the person next to them. Discuss the organization of an almanac while the students discover also that it is organized *by topics*. It is not in alphabetical order as many reference sources.)

“An almanac has several places to help you find your topic.

“Look at the Table of Contents at the beginning of the book. How are these topics organized? (in the same order they are presented in the book).

“The almanac also has an index. It is at the back of the book.

“How is the index ordered? (alphabetically) There are two kinds of information in the index. Main sections appear in **boldfaced** type. These are the same as the sections listed in the Table of Contents. Subtopics are listed under many main sections. The subtopics can help narrow your search for more specific information.

“Use your almanac to find some information together. On what page does the “Flag” section begin? Turn to the Flag section. How many stars are on Tuvalu’s flag? (9)

“In what section would you look to find the name of the world’s largest animal? (*Animals*...Blue Whale)

“Before we finish, give your partner one fact to find.
Good job!”

(Gather up the Almanacs.)