

The World Almanac® and Book of Facts 2014 **Helpful Hints for Teachers & Parents**

Bringing real-world information to students in school and at home

Exploring *The World Almanac*

This guide and the accompanying worksheets are designed to help teachers, parents, and students use *The World Almanac* for research reports, for homework and other school assignments, and just for fun.

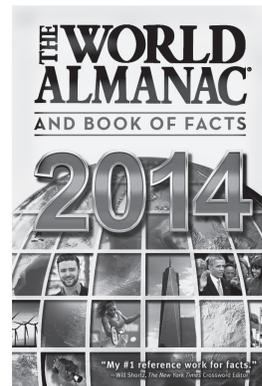
The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2014 has millions of facts that are entertaining, fascinating, and relevant to homework and research assignments. There is a wealth of current information on countries in the news and in students' studies. Tons of statistics from the U.S. government provide comparative data on education, poverty, business, energy, employment, and health around the country. Add sports stats and notable personalities and you've got a well-rounded snapshot of today's world. These facts will answer students' questions and help them develop well-documented, in-depth reports.

By learning to find relevant, current information in *The World Almanac*, students will develop information literacy skills. The volume of information available to students is vast and often unreliable. It is increasingly important that students understand how to sift through the myriad sources to find appropriate, authoritative information. Information literacy is just that: the ability to find, use, evaluate, and interpret information. Learning to use *The World Almanac* will also improve students' reading comprehension and help them to develop critical thinking skills.

After completing a few general activities included here and using *The World Almanac* regularly for schoolwork, students will develop many key research and literacy skills:

- Use an index quickly and efficiently
- Understand various data formats, including charts, tables, and graphs

- Recognize how to read chronologies and time lines of historical events
- Use strategies such as skimming and scanning to find information
- Extract information from what was read
- Form a reasonable judgment about the accuracy, completeness, and relevance of information
- Define, locate, and recognize the information needed for a specific goal or project
- Recognize when further information is required
- Become a capable independent researcher



The World Almanac as an Authoritative, Objective Resource

The word “almanac” derives from the Greek word *almenichiaka*, which means “calendar.” The earliest almanacs were calendars that included agricultural, astronomical, or meteorological data. Today, many almanacs are published yearly, and they include information, much of it statistical, on a wide variety of topics.

An almanac provides the facts in an objective way, without presenting any point of view or advocating any course of action. It is up to the user to draw conclusions from the raw material.

An almanac is a unique reference because it brings together in one place a vast amount of authoritative, useful, and current information that is not readily available in any other source. An almanac will quickly become an essential tool for students doing schoolwork or any kind of research.

GETTING STARTED



If you're not familiar with *The World Almanac*, spend a few minutes browsing the book. You may find yourself sidetracked by intriguing facts and trivia; share your findings with your students. It's an easy way to get them involved in the process of discovery. There are also a few key tools that make *The World Almanac* easy to use when you are looking up information on a certain topic. These tools are used universally in print and electronic information sources, and learning to use them effectively is a key study skill for every student.

Table of Contents and Indexes

The **Contents** page at the beginning of *The World Almanac* provides an overview of the subjects for which information is presented. Students looking for current information in a broad subject area, such as Crime, Agriculture, or Meteorology, can quickly find the appropriate section by using the **Contents** list.

The **Quick Reference Index** on the last page of *The World Almanac* lists in more detail key topics covered in the almanac. It is still short enough, however, to be searched quickly for a topic of interest. Besides including many of the subject areas also in the **Contents** list, the **Quick Reference Index** directs readers to such important and commonly researched topics as Colleges and Universities, Holidays, the Internet, Planets, and State Governors.

The **General Index** on pages 979-1007 is the most complete listing of the wealth of information in *The World Almanac*. Students looking for a specific fact or the answer to a specific question should consult the **General Index**. To help students use the **General Index** most effectively, introduce the concept of key words or phrases. Ask for a list of words or phrases to look for in the **General Index** that might lead to the following facts:

- The speed of a zebra
- The birth year of painter Pablo Picasso

After compiling the list, ask students to predict which words or phrases will lead most directly to the information. Discuss the use of general terms and synonyms in indexing. For example, topics indexed under **Animals** may include information about

zebras. Index entries for **Painters** or **Art** can lead to information about Picasso.

Then, find the information by looking up each key word or phrase on the list. When finished, discuss the use of topics and subtopics in the index to locate more specific information.

(Page 1 of the worksheets has more information on the indexes.)

Typographical Cues

Typographical cues can help readers find information or understand how information is organized. Ask students to browse *The World Almanac* for topics of interest. Then ask them to identify typographical cues and explain how these cues helped them find information. For example, the header at the top of a page tells readers the chapter name and the topic(s) of the information on that page; larger bold type tells readers what is included in each table, list, or article; gray shading helps users to read across a table.

Reading Articles

Skimming is a good technique for a student to use when searching through an article for the main idea. Invite students to skim a short almanac article and then summarize the main idea in a sentence.

Using Lists and Tables

Scanning is a great way to find a specific piece of information. Explain that when scanning, you should run your eyes over a list or table, looking only for key words or phrases and disregarding everything else. This is a valuable technique to use when searching for a certain number, date, or name. Ask students to use the index to find the table listing Nobel Prize winners. Then pose these questions:

- What would be the fastest way to find out who won the prize for literature in 1993? (Answer: Scan the Literature section by running your eyes down the column to find the year 1993, and note the name opposite the date.)
- How can you quickly find out how many Americans won the peace prize between the years 2001 and 2012? (Answer: Find the span of years 2001 to 2012, and scan the list of winners looking for the country name "U.S.")
- What printing cues helped you find the answers? (Answer: Boldface section headings and dates.)

USING *THE WORLD ALMANAC* FOR SCHOOL PROJECTS

The World Almanac is a great resource for students who are assigned a school project. If a student is struggling to come up with a project idea, browsing *The World Almanac* will turn up many possible topics. Once a student has a research topic, he or she can use the real-life, current information in *The World Almanac* as a resource.

This guide also includes many ideas for independent projects in social studies, language arts, science, and math. By taking on these projects, students learn how to find, use, and interpret information. In many cases, the projects listed here can also fulfill the requirements of a school assignment.

SOCIAL STUDIES PROJECTS

The World Almanac is an excellent social studies reference book. It provides information that supports curriculum in such subject areas as the U.S. Constitution and government, U.S. states, U.S. history, countries of the world, world history, and more. Other key social studies subjects in *The World Almanac* include current events, presidential election results, and historical documents, as well as full-color pages of maps and flags of the world.

Timeline

Construct a timeline for a given period using information from *The World Almanac*. The World History and the World Exploration and Geography sections, the United States History chronology, the Discoveries and Innovations and the Inventions lists, the Noted Personalities section, and the Presidents of the United States section are just a few examples of information that can help you build well-developed timelines. Try creating a timeline on a specific topic, such as inventions that improved transportation, advancements made in equal rights in the U.S. since the Civil War, or events in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century that led up to World War I. A timeline is an easy way to understand how later events build on earlier ones and is a great addition to any research project.

Government in Action

Look at the Chronology of Events in the Year in Review section and create a research report on one of the important actions taken by the U.S. Supreme Court during 2013.

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Trip Around the World

Using the maps and the Nations of the World section in *The World Almanac*, plan a trip around the world in which you stop at eight cities on at least four different continents. On your itinerary, record what currency you will use and what language(s) are spoken at each destination.



International Studies

The literacy rate, life expectancy, natural resources, and size of a country's economy in relation to its population (that is, per capita GDP) can have a dramatic impact on the prosperity of a country. Create a chart comparing these major economic and social indicators for 10-12 countries selected from various regions and continents around the world. Then, write a paragraph or create a bullet-point list describing at least three conclusions that can be drawn from the data in your chart.

LANGUAGE ARTS PROJECTS

The World Almanac can provide real-life reading and writing experiences.

Writing Letters

Use *The World Almanac* to locate the contact information (for example: mailing address, website) for a government agency, a sports team, or a company. Then, write a letter or email to request information; to express your views on a particular issue, event, or product; or to show support for something. Before you write your message, think about and outline what you want to say. Present your ideas clearly and logically. Check over your message for correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar before you send it.

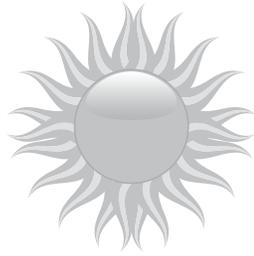


Vocabulary

Choose ten words from the list of Commonly Misspelled English Words (page 712) in *The World Almanac*. Make up a story that correctly uses each of the selected words.

SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

The World Almanac includes a wealth of information to support a science curriculum and fascinate students. Animals, inventions and discoveries, stars and planets, and weather are just a few of the topics covered.



Endangered Species

Examine the list of endangered animal species on pages 297-98 and select one species. Do further research on this animal using *The World Almanac*, other books, and Internet sources, especially online databases that you can access through your library. Determine the ecological importance of the species, the reasons it has become endangered, and what actions are being taken or could be taken to prevent this species from becoming extinct.

Weather

Examine the table Annual Climatological Data for U.S. Cities, 2012 in *The World Almanac* (page 302). Select two cities in different parts of the country, such as Denver, Colorado, and Jacksonville, Florida. Look at the weather each city experienced, including the temperature range, total precipitation, and amount of snowfall. Then, use the table and additional research to learn about the geography of each city (for example, its elevation, latitude, and the terrain of the surrounding region) and to figure out how geography can affect weather. From your research, list several key factors that influence the weather in each city.

Renewable Energy

Read the article on page 116 of *The World Almanac* to learn about major renewable energy sources. Then, do research to find the following: What renewable sources are being used in your state? How much of your state's total energy consumption do they account for? Which renewable sources are best suited to your state, given such factors as its climate, natural features, and economy? What is the potential to increase the use of renewable energy sources in your state? What are some obstacles to meeting more of the state's energy needs through renewable sources? To gather information, you can use books and online databases

available through your library, check government websites, and ask for information from agencies of your state government.

MATH ACTIVITIES

The World Almanac includes millions of statistics about high-interest real-world topics. These statistics can be the basis for a wide range of questions that students can solve to improve their computation and math reasoning skills.

Money Matters

Use the currency information in the Nations of the World section to answer these questions:

- If you visited Germany and converted \$150 into local currency, how many euros would you get?
- If a book costs 15 pounds in the United Kingdom, how much does it cost in U.S. dollars?
- A German tourist in the U.S. converts 250 euros into dollars. A British tourist converts 250 pounds into dollars. Which one of them will receive more dollars? Explain the reasoning behind your answer.

High Speed

In Milestones in Aviation History on page 327, look at the statistics for Charles Lindbergh's historic 1927 solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. Rounding his flying time to 33.5 hours, what was Lindbergh's average speed (to the nearest whole number) for the 3,610-mile flight? Now look at the speed of the B747-400 in the Aircraft Operating Statistics table on page 326. To the nearest whole number, how many times faster is the B747-400 than Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis*? Before you calculate the answer, use your estimating skills to predict what the answer will be. Was your estimate correct?

Facts About People and Places

In the States and Other Areas of the U.S. section, the article on each state includes the racial distribution of its population and the percentage of the population that is Hispanic. Select two states to compare (for example, Hawaii and New York). First, create two population bar graphs. Each graph should present a state's racial/Hispanic breakdown. Then, compare the data in your graphs, and write three statements describing differences in the two states' population breakdowns.