

Name _____ Period _____

Using Reference Material



There are a few reference sources that are most use at our library. They are Dictionaries, General Encyclopedias, Specialized Encyclopedias, Almanacs, Biographical Sources, and Atlases. The following chart will help you become familiar with these sources.

Dictionaries	A book composed of an alphabetical listing of words with their meanings, pronunciations, and etymologies. There are general dictionaries of English and other languages and specialized subject dictionaries in fields such as business, law, medicine, etc.	If you have no previous knowledge or basic understanding of your research topic a dictionary is a good place to start your research.
General Encyclopedias and Specialized Encyclopedia	General encyclopedias have a little information about many subjects. Specialized encyclopedias focus on a specific subject like science or history. They give more detailed information about fewer topics.	After you have checked the dictionary on your topic, an encyclopedia is a good source to check next. If you can locate a specialized encyclopedia on your topic you will probably find information that goes more deeply into your topic.
Almanacs	Published yearly. Information is up-to-date. Information on each topic is very short.	A good source to check to update your research.
Biographical Sources	Information about the lives of individuals (living or dead) of diverse nationalities and professions who have contributed something noteworthy.	Biographies are a way to study the history, culture and the human side of any topic in which you are interested.
Atlas	Atlases are organized geographically on diverse topic with compilations of maps and charts. Often contain valuable data on countries, the universe, demographics, history, the environment and social issues.	Use atlases when you need information on countries of the world or information concerning the planets or universe.

It is a good idea to search for as many sources on your topic as you have time to evaluate for its usefulness to you. After evaluating all of your sources, choose the best ones to write your paper. Different sources can provide different information on your topic.

Use the chart on the first page to help you answer the following questions.

1. What type of book could you use to start your research if you have little or no previous knowledge about your research topic?

2. If you already have some knowledge on your topic, what type of reference source would be a good place to begin you research?

3. If you are doing research on a person what **two** reference sources could you check for information?

4. What reference source will have the most up-to-date information? Why? What makes this source less useful than some other reference sources?

5. If you need geographical information what reference source could you use?

6. When doing research, is it a good idea to use more than one source? Why?
