

# ***The World Almanac® and Book of Facts 2011*** **Helpful Hints for Parents & Teachers**

***Bringing real-world information to home and school studies***

## **Exploring *The World Almanac***

This guide and the accompanying worksheets are designed to help teachers, parents, and children use *The World Almanac* for fun and research.

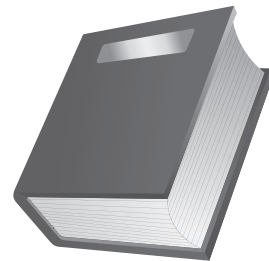
*The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2011* has a million facts that are entertaining, fascinating, and relevant for homework and research assignments. There is a wealth of current information on countries in the news and in students' studies. Tons of statistics from the U.S. government provide comparative data on education, poverty, business, 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 kids' questions and help them develop well-informed, 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, reliable information. Information literacy is just that: the ability find, use, and interpret information. As with any written source, learning to use *The World Almanac* will also improve students' reading comprehension and help to develop critical thinking skills.

After completing a few general activities included here and using *The World Almanac* regularly for schoolwork, your student 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 a Family 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. An almanac is published yearly and includes a variety of information, much of it statistical. Since it includes little or no explanation of the significance or interpretation of the facts, an almanac leaves it to the user to draw conclusions from the raw material.

An almanac is a unique reference work because it includes a vast amount of useful and current information that is not readily available in any other reference source. An almanac will quickly become an integral part of your family's day-to-day reference activities.

## GETTING STARTED



If you're not familiar with *The World Almanac*, spend a few minutes browsing through the book. You will surely find yourself sidetracked by intriguing facts and trivia; share your

findings with your family. It's an easy way to get your children involved in the process of discovery. There are also a few key tools that make using *The World Almanac* easy to use when you are looking up something specific. 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.

### Indexes

The **General Index** will help students access the wealth of information in *The World Almanac*. Introduce the concept of "key words or phrases." Ask for a list of words or phrases that might be used to find the following facts:

- The speed of a zebra
- The birth year of painter Pablo Picasso
- The number of people living in your state

After compiling the list, ask students to predict which words or phrases will lead most directly to the information. Discuss the use of synonyms or generalizations in indexing. For example: zebra/animal; painter/artist.

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.

Here's another way to use the **General Index**: choose some entries and ask students to predict in which section of the **Quick Reference Index** on the last page of *The World Almanac* each entry belongs. Make up questions whose answers can be found directly from the indexes.

(Worksheet #1 has more information on the indexes.)

### Typographical cues

Typographical cues can help readers find information or understand how information is organized. While browsing through *The World Almanac* for topics of interest, ask students to identify typographic cues and explain how these cues helped him or her find information (for example: headers at the top of the page tell you the chapter name; larger bold type tells you what is included in the table, chart, or article; gray shading helps you to read across a chart).

### Reading Articles

Skimming is a good technique for a child to use when searching through an article for the main idea. Invite students to skim a short article in *The World Almanac* and then summarize the main idea of the article in a sentence.



### Using Lists and Tables

Scanning is a great way to find a specific piece of information.

Explain that when scanning, one should run his or her eyes over a list or table, looking only for a key word or phrase and disregarding everything else. This is a valuable technique to use when searching for a certain number, date, or name.

Ask your child to use the index to find the table "The Alfred B. Nobel Prize Winners" and 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.)
- What printing cues help you scan the columns? (answer: Boldface section headings; dates)

## USING THE WORLD ALMANAC FOR SCHOOL PROJECTS

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

In addition to using *The World Almanac* for specific assigned projects, this guide includes many ideas for independent projects in social studies, language arts, science and math. By completing these projects, students can learn how to find, use and interpret information. In many cases, the projects listed here will also fill the requirements of a school assignment.

## SOCIAL STUDIES PROJECTS

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*The World Almanac* is an excellent social studies reference book. It provides access to information about the United States government, important international agencies, the U.S. Constitution, world history, and more. Other key Social Studies subjects found in *The World Almanac* include: Current Events, Voting, Election Returns, and Historical Documents, as well as full-color pages of maps and flags of the world.

### Time Line

Construct a time line for a given period using information from *The World Almanac*. The United States History chronology, Inventions section, Noted Personalities, and Presidents of the U.S. are just a few of the sections that will help build well-developed time lines. Try creating a time line on a specific topic, like electronic inventions or medical discoveries. This is an easy way to understand how events can impact each other and is a great addition to any research project.

### Government in Action

Look to 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. Congress in the past year.

## Trip Around the World

Looking at the maps 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.



## Holidays

Choose one international holiday from the listing of holidays in *The World Almanac*. Research the country to find out what languages are spoken and where in the world the country is located. Then research the holiday to find out how it is celebrated. Is music part of the holiday? What types of foods are typically eaten?

## International Studies

Literacy rates, life expectancy, and major industries can have a dramatic impact on the prosperity and culture of a country. Create a chart comparing these major economic and social indicators for countries from various regions and continents around the world.

## LANGUAGE ARTS PROJECTS

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



### Writing Letters

Locate the address for a government official, sports team, or company in *The World Almanac*. Use the address to write a fan letter, request information, or write a letter of complaint.

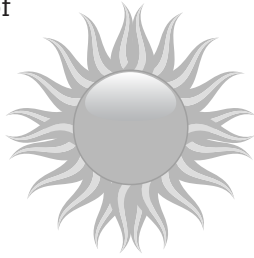
### Vocabulary

Choose ten words from the list of “Commonly Misspelled Words” (page 715) in *The World Almanac*. Make up a story that correctly uses each of the selected words.

## SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

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You can find facts about some of your favorite subjects in *The World Almanac*. Animals, inventions and discoveries, planets, and weather are a few of the sections that will entertain the entire family with wild and fun facts.



### Endangered Species

Examine the lists of endangered species (pages 305–06) in *The World Almanac* and select one species. Do further research in *The World Almanac*, the library, and on the internet to determine the ecological importance of the species and the reasons why it has become endangered.

### Weather

Examine the table “Annual Climatological Data for U.S. Cities” in *The World Almanac* (page 310). Compare and explain the reasons for the varying climates of two different cities, such as Atlanta, Georgia, and Portland, Oregon.

## USING THE WORLD ALMANAC IN MATHEMATICS

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*The World Almanac* includes millions of numbers, all of which can be added, subtracted, multiplied, and divided to yield meaningful—and often intriguing—results.

### Money

Using the currency information in the Nations of the World section of *The World Almanac*, create and solve international currency questions, such as:

- If you traveled to Algeria and converted a \$25 traveler’s check into local currency, how many dinars would you receive?
- If a book costs 15 pounds in the United Kingdom, how much does it cost in U.S. dollars?

### High Speed

Figure the average speed achieved by one of the airplanes listed in “Milestones in Aviation History” (page 335) in the Aerospace section.

### Sales Tax

Find the sales tax in your state (pages 573–601) and compare it with other neighboring states. Compute how much sales tax you would pay on a \$150 item.