

Types of Reference Sources

Almanac	usually a one-volume work with statistics and a compilation of specific facts (e.g. <i>World Almanac and Book of Facts</i> , and <i>Information Please Almanac</i>)
Atlas	a book of maps and geographical information (e.g. <i>Atlas of American History</i>)
Bibliography	a compilation of sources of information, provides literature on a specific subject or by a specific author (e.g. <i>Books in Print</i> and <i>Bibliography of African Literatures</i>)
Biographical Dictionary	sources of information about the lives of people; short entries (e.g. <i>Current Biography</i> and <i>Who's Who in America</i>)
Chronology	lists the events described in order of the date on which they occurred
Concordance	an alphabetical listing of keywords or phrases found in the work of an author or work in a collection of writings (e.g. <i>Topical Bible Concordance</i>)
Dictionary	defines words and terms; confirms spelling, definition, and pronunciation; used to find out how words are used; helps to locate synonyms and antonyms and to trace the origin of words (e.g. <i>Webster's Dictionary</i>)
Directory	lists names and addresses of individuals, companies, organizations, and institutions (e.g. <i>Encyclopedia of Associations</i>)
Encyclopedia	covers knowledge or branches of knowledge in a comprehensive, but summary fashion; useful for providing facts and giving a broad survey of a topic; written by specialists (e.g. <i>World Book Encyclopedia</i>)
Gazetteer	a dictionary of geographical places (no maps) (e.g. <i>Webster's New Geographical Dictionary</i>)
Guidebook	provides detailed descriptions of places; intended primarily for the traveler; geographical facts plus maps (e.g. <i>Great Lakes Guidebook</i>)
Handbook	treats one broad subject in brief, or gives a brief survey of a subject (e.g. <i>Handbook of American Popular Culture</i>)
Index	lists citations to periodical articles, book, and proceedings, and tells where they can be found (e.g. <i>Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature</i> and <i>New York Times Index</i>)
Manual	a specific work that tells how to do something, such as how something operates; descriptions of the inner workings of an organization (e.g. <i>MLA Handbook</i> , and <i>Broadcast News Manual of Style</i>)
Yearbook	covers the trends and events of the previous year; may be general in coverage, limited to one subject, or restricted to one geographical area (e.g. <i>State of America's Children Yearbook</i>)

Characteristics of Reference Sources

Non-Circulating: Reference books cannot be checked out of the library

Quick Facts: Reference books are not read straight through, like novels; you usually simply “refer” to them when you need quick, basic information

Overview: Reference books provide a quick introduction to your topic, a brief overview; these overviews are especially helpful when you begin researching a topic you don’t know much about

Bibliographies, Cross References & See-also References: Because discussions on topics in Reference Books are not in-depth, entries include suggestions to review related articles within the book itself (cross and see-also references) and citations to other related, in-depth sources (bibliographies)

Specific Arrangement: Reference books are organized in very specific ways, depending on the type of book. For example, chronologies are arranged by date, dictionaries are arranged in alphabetical order by word and encyclopedias are arranged in alphabetical order by subject

Disciplines and Their Subjects

Humanities

Architecture
Art
Classical Studies
History
Journalism
Literature
Music
Philosophy
Poetry
Religion

Social Sciences

Anthropology
Business
Criminal Justice
Economics
Education
Geography
History
Law
Management
Political Science
Psychology
Social Work
Sociology

Science

Agriculture
Biology
Chemistry
Computer Science
Engineering
Environment
Health
Mathematics
Medicine
Petroleum
Physics

Examples of how to figure out which discipline your topic fits into

Approach	Discipline
Women and employment	Social Sciences (Business)
The way that discrimination against women is reflected in literature	Humanities (Literature)
The ability of women to handle the same physical jobs as men	Science (Biology)