



Reference Sources

How Do I... Undergraduate Research Guides

Part of the "Start My Research Series"

In this guide you will learn how to:

- Find background information on your topics.
- Access print and electronic reference materials.
- Understand the differences between types of reference sources.

Reference sources are great resources to use as you get started on your topic. They are not intended to be read cover-to-cover, but rather provide you with more concise information as you begin to explore a topic. Reference sources generally provide several things:

- Background information about a topic.
- Brief, factual overviews of topics.
- Information about important dates, events, and people associated with a topic.
- Terminology and definitions of terms related to a topic.
- Articles written by authors with expertise in the subject matter.
- Bibliographies of sources for further reading.

Need More Help? Ask a Librarian!

Chat:
www.library.illinois.edu/askus

Text:
217-686-4361

Phone:
217-333-8589

Hours:
<http://www.library.illinois.edu/services/hours.php>



Types of reference sources

Different types of reference sources answer different types of questions. Listed below are common types of reference sources and the kind of information contained in each:

- **Almanac** - *Compilations of facts and statistics, usually one volume.*
- **Atlas** - *Maps and geographical information.*
- **Biographical sources** - *Biographical information about individuals.*
- **Dictionary** - *Definitions of terms, either general or in relation to a specific subject or discipline.*
- **Encyclopedia** - *Comprehensive summaries of factual information, providing more detail than a dictionary.*
- **Handbook** - *Concise explanatory information on a topic.*

Reference Sources at the UGL

The reference books are all included in the Undergraduate Library's Reference Collection and online. These are suggested as good starting points for getting started in various subject areas. If you do not see a reference book or resource that will help you find information on your topic, ask for assistance at the **Research Desk**.

Print Reference

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/>

Check out this web page for a list of suggested reference books. This is by no means a comprehensive list of sources.

Online Reference

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/find/ereference.html>

Check out this web page to access our electronic reference sources. If you have any questions on how to use these resources, ask at the **Research Desk**.

Sample subject areas available:

Check out other How Do I... Guides in this series, **Start My Research**:

- **Choosing a Topic**
- **Developing a Topic**
- **Creating a Concept Map**
- **Find Topic Ideas**

- Advertising/Marketing
- Crime and Law (including Violence and Guns)
- Drugs—Their Use and Abuse
- Education
- Environment
- Ethics
- Fine Arts (Film, Music, Theater, Photography)
- Health/Medicine
- Literature
- Media and Communication
- Political Science
- Popular Culture
- Psychology
- Race, Class, Culture, Sexual Orientation, Gender
- Religion
- Social Problems (National & Domestic)
- Sports/Recreation
- Terrorism
- Women and Gender

