

Using Reference Books:

The following information include exercises in using four basic types of reference works: almanacs, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and quotation books. Each type is discussed in some detail, followed by practice questions to be answered from either a specific source or a type of tool. The exercises are designed to show the usefulness of the reference works concerned, but also to sharpen search skills in using them. These are just sample questions, and **you will not have to answer them.**

Almanacs

Almanacs are compendiums of useful data on events, people, and topics from a wide variety of areas, and statistics on topics such as health, presidential elections, population, crime, and the economy. The World Almanac, which is international in scope but with emphasis on the United States, is perhaps the library's most valuable quick reference tool. For Texas libraries, the Texas Almanac has special significance. It provides coverage of state history, environment, politics and government, recreation, and numerous other topics. It, too, includes a wealth of statistical data.

Since almanacs are generally arranged topically, it is essential to use the index in accessing the information they contain. If looking under what one considers to be the topic of the question does not produce results, try thinking of synonyms or broader or narrower terms. Information often is indexed under more than one topic. The list of all persons who have served as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, for example, is indexed in the World Almanac under:

Agriculture, Department of-Secretaries

Secretaries, U.S.-U.S. Cabinets

Cabinet members, U.S.

United States of America-Cabinets

Questions that follow are designed not only to offer practice in using the specific almanac, but also to point out the wide variety of kinds of information they contain.

Sample Exercises (DO NOT ANSWER)

Texas Almanac

1. What are some of the Texas state holidays that were designated by the Texas Legislature? (Note that the Holidays, Anniversaries and Festivals chart can be found in the index under both "holidays" and "state-holidays.")
2. In 1986, Elmer Kelton received the Lon Tinkle Award, presented each year by the Texas Institute of Letters. Who are some of the other winners of the Award? (Note that the information can be found in the index under both "Texas Institute of Letters Awards" and "Awards, book-writers.")
3. What is the name of the Bandera, Texas newspaper? How often is it published? (Note that you must read the introductory information for the chart in order to determine the answer to the second question.)
4. What is the name and address of the public library in Borger? (Note the arrangement of the chart is by city, not the name of the library.)
5. Does the Texas Constitution give the governor the right to call out the militia in case of hostile Indian incursion? (Note that the Texas Constitution is indexed separately, and that the index is located in front of the body of the Constitution.)
6. For whom was Deaf Smith County named? What is the county's average annual rainfall? (Note the detailed county maps that are located in the Counties section.)
7. How are members of the Teacher Retirement System appointed?
8. Where is the annual Cowboys' Christmas Ball held?
9. What was the Know-Nothing Party's contribution to party politics in Texas? (Note this useful "A Brief Sketch of Texas History" section.)
10. Are both the ocelot and the white-nosed coati endangered species in Texas?
11. Which has the larger membership in Texas, the Catholic Church or the Southern Baptist Convention?
12. Which has the higher crime rate, Dallas County or Harris County

World Almanac

1. How do the tuition and fees at Rice University compare with those at Harvard?
2. What is the gestation period for giraffes?
3. In what day of the week was October 1, 1955? On what day will it fall in 2010? (You are seeking a perpetual calendar. The chart in the upper right hand corner tells you which calendar applies.)
4. Who was Secretary of the Interior under President Roosevelt?
5. Find a list of the royal family of Norway.
6. How do Protestants, Catholics, and Jews differ in the listing of the Ten Commandments?
7. What special names are given to the young of the following animals: fish, fox, hare, turkey, grouse? (If you are stumped, try looking under "animals.")
8. What is the recommended age to administer the chickenpox immunization to children?
9. What is the literacy rate in Afghanistan? What is its chief religion? (Information on Nation of the World provides this data and a great deal else on each country's government, history, geography, economy, etc.)

10. What is the address of the National Association of Arab Americans? (See note at the beginning of the listing of Associations and Organizations.)
11. What was Tom Cruise's original name? When and where was he born?
12. How does the salary of the governor of Arkansas compare with that of the governor of Texas?
13. Who was the Number One National Football League draft choice for 1989?
14. How many zeros in a quadrillion?
15. What is the federal income tax rate for persons earning \$84,000 annually?
16. How many people died in the Alaska earthquake of 1964?

Encyclopedias

Today's encyclopedias in either print or electronic form summarize basic knowledge and information on important subjects. The word encyclopedia is derived from the Greek words *enkyklios* (circle) and *paideia* (of learning), thus "circle of knowledge." Their aim is to record knowledge and information educated people have deemed worth knowing. Thus they contain articles describing significant people, places, things, events, activities, philosophies, and concepts. The text is supported by illustrative materials designed to illuminate or enhance the text—photographs, maps, charts, and diagrams—and by other features such as chronologies, fact boxes, glossaries, and bibliographies

Encyclopedias, whether in paper or online, contain a vast amount of information. Most users expect to find an article about the American Revolution or a biographical entry for a well-known historical figure, but may not know that the set contains instructions for playing canasta and other games, concise summaries of literary classics and operas, or maps of major cities of the world. Both the library patron, and even the librarian who assists the user, often underutilize these sets of information.

Some electronic versions of encyclopedias, also called multimedia sets, further enhance the learning process by adding sound and animation in order that the user can hear the music of Mozart and see a step-by-step animation of the building of the Egyptian pyramids. These visual aids not only recognize the differing needs of individuals in the learning process but also break language barriers for bilingual users.

The general encyclopedia is a springboard to further investigation, a starting point for more in depth study. Teachers, unfortunately, often prohibit students from using the encyclopedia in researching information for a paper, in fear that they will simply copy the article. The student would be better served if instructed to first read about the topic in an encyclopedia in order to obtain basic knowledge concerning it. A basic purpose of the encyclopedia is to summarize unfamiliar or complicated subject matter in order to make it understandable to the average reader. After obtaining general knowledge about the topic, the student is better prepared to do research. The student also may realize the need to narrow the topic in order to make the research more manageable.

Encyclopedias, especially the multi-volume sets, are alphabetically arranged with generous cross-references and an index to aid the user in accessing the vast amount of information they contain. Because of the alphabetical arrangement, many users do not recognize the importance of the set's index. Despite the cross-references designed to lead the user to related material, an index is essential to the intelligent use of any encyclopedia. If, for example, the user failed to find an entry under the name of a composer, that does not necessarily mean there is no information in the set. The index could reveal that the composer is discussed in an article concerning a type of music or on music composition. The index provides an analysis of information contained in articles that could be of value to the searcher. When using an electronic set, this type of search is done automatically, but this is not the case when conducting a manual search.

In addition to general encyclopedias, there are literally thousands of subject encyclopedias that focus on either a broad area such as the humanities or a narrow topic such as American literature. While the general encyclopedia would normally include a paragraph or two on Larry McMurry, the subject encyclopedia might have several pages on the writer. In other words, the subject encyclopedia provides more in depth information on a particular field of knowledge. Subject works, which may be a single volume or a multi-volume set, often utilize terms other than "encyclopedia" in their titles. The words "handbook" or "dictionary" are often used as in *New Handbook of Texas* and *Dictionary of American History*, both of which are classified as subject encyclopedias. By the same token, the word "encyclopedia" may be used to indicate completeness as in *Encyclopedia of Associations*, which is a directory.

Sample Exercise (Do Not Answer)

You can use print, CD-ROM, or the Internet (TexShare) version of any encyclopedia in answering the following questions.

1. How are cereals puffed?
2. How is the name Asclepius, the god of healing in Greek mythology, pronounced?
3. Find a map of Captain James Cook's three great voyages.
4. What do the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse symbolize?
5. Find an explanation for scoring in tennis.
6. Should one apply heat or cold to a sprain?
7. What is the story of Evangeline about whom Longfellow wrote a narrative poem?
8. Find an explanation of how the escalator works.
9. What beliefs are codified in *Malleus Maleficarum*?
10. I know there are edible, poisonous, and deadly mushrooms. What are the names of each type?
11. What causes baldness?
12. What musical instruments are in the woodwinds family?
13. Find listings and illustrations of different types of roofs.
14. Who were Eleanor of Aquitaine's two husbands?
15. What were some of Rene Descartes' contributions to mathematics?

Dictionaries

One uses general language dictionaries most frequently to find definitions, spellings, and pronunciations. A good dictionary, however, includes other useful data: etymologies, synonyms and antonyms, variant spellings, and grammar. Foreign words and phrases often used in English, common abbreviations, and slang words and expressions usually are included. Some general language dictionaries contain major place names—cities, historical locations, rivers, mountains, and other geographic features—and major personal names—authors, historical figures, Biblical and mythological names.

Entries sometimes provide unusual data (e.g., the height and other differences between African and Indian elephants or an explanation of the death rattle). A typical appendix to a general language dictionary may include non-dictionary type information—punctuation guide, proofreaders' marks, tables of weights and measures, and signs and symbols. With these facts in mind, answer the following questions using any general language dictionary, preferably one listed in the dictionary section of this handbook.

Sample Exercise (Do Not Answer)

1. Find a picture of a hammerhead shark.
2. 'Olla podrida' is a rich highly seasoned stew. What is its literal meaning in Spanish?
3. How does one write 800 in Roman numerals?
4. What does the expression 'to pay the piper' mean?
5. What is the weight span for bantam-weight boxers?
6. What does the acronym ESOP mean?
7. In which of Shakespeare's plays does the character Banquo appear?
8. How many words are listed in Basic English? In this instance, from what is Basic derived?
9. How do the words 'proud' and 'arrogant' differ in meaning?
10. For whom was the Ferris wheel named?
11. When does the Jewish Year 5764 begin?
12. What is the origin of the expression 'Peeping Tom'?
13. When did the word 'opossum' enter the language? From what language?
14. What are the dates of the American Revised Standard Version of the Bible?
15. What is the range of 'very low frequency' in radio?
16. What is the origin of the name of the civil organization 'Jaycee'?
17. What is 'Munchausen syndrome'? For whom is the term named?
18. What is a 'G suit'?
19. Where in the Bible is the Sermon on the Mount recorded?

Quotation Sources

The role of the quotation book is to record who said what, but the works are mainly concerned with recording statements made by the famous, and more recently, those made in the popular media. The subtitle of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, the oldest and one of the best quotation source available, explains its content as "a collection of passages, phrases and proverbs traced to their sources in ancient and modern literature." The term "literature" is used loosely, however, since among those quoted are persons from many fields including the political arena. In order to be recorded in a quotation book, the statement must in some way be significant, at least in the eyes of the work's compiler. There are some 250 or so quotation books in print. Some will duplicate each other in part, but each is likely to include many unique statements. The small library, of course, will hold only a limited number of these works.

Requests to identify quotations can be frustrating questions for the librarian. At times the quote is so obscure it cannot be located, or the inquirer has muddled the wording. On occasion, the inquirer asks where in the Bible or in Shakespeare a certain "quotation" appears, when in reality the statement is an adage. A long-time column in the professional journal *RQ* called "The Exchange" focused on unanswered reference questions. Librarians were asked to assist in solving the query. A high percentage of those questions submitted to the column were about quotations.

Since *Bartlett's*, as it is usually termed, is the quotation book most likely to be held by the small library, the questions below focus on its use. In learning to use the work, it is important to notice its arrangement. The main body of the volume consists mainly of quotations by individuals listed chronologically by their birth dates. A section of anonymous sayings, spirituals, shanties, nursery rhymes, ballads, and the like conclude the work. There is an alphabetical index to persons quoted in the front of the volume. The quotations are indexed by key words, arranged in word-by-word sequence (New Zealand precedes Newborn), with references to page and entry number, e.g., 145:13. The work includes many footnotes, which are important to read. They contain background comments, cross-references to similar quotes, and other useful information.

Sample Exercise (Do Not Answer)

1. Why did Germans who heard President John F. Kennedy's 1963 speech in West Berlin titter when he said "Ich bin ein Berliner?"
2. When did William Least Heat-Moon say the pull of the blue highway is strongest?
3. To what does Benjamin Franklin's statement about "for want of a nail the shoe was lost" pertain?
4. In early treaties with Native Americans, the United States used an expression that included the phrase "as long as the grass shall grow." What is the entire expression?

5. What did Louis Armstrong reply when asked what is jazz?
6. John Steinbeck wrote a book entitled Grapes of Wrath. Julia Ward Howe used the expression in "Battle Hymn of the Republic." What is its origin?
7. Find the rhyme about what the bells of London say-Old Bailey, Shoreditch, etc.
8. What epitaph did Dorothy Parker suggest for herself?
9. What is that quote about Puritans fleeing to a land of freedom where they can enjoy their own religion and keep others from enjoying theirs?
10. Where in the Bible is the plea about being the apple of thy eye?
11. What term did William Archibald Spooner contribute to the language? What does it mean?
12. From which of Oscar Wilde's books did the statement "a man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies" come?
13. What does "Pop Goes the Weasel" mean?
14. Does "God loveth a cheerful giver" come from the Bible?