

# Almanac

## Description

An almanac is an interesting collection of facts and bits of advice. The first almanac, Benjamin Franklin's famous *Poor Richard's Almanac*, included factual data such as when solar or lunar eclipses would occur and pieces of advice ranging from wise sayings such as "A penny saved is a penny earned" to "It is important to plant potatoes by the dark of the moon." Almanac entries are a means of compiling data that often require knowledge of some statistics and of calculating mean, median, and mode.

## Planning

1. Visit the school or public library and find examples of current almanacs. Review them to determine topics covered, numbers recorded, statistics reported, calculations applied, and types of data that would be of interest or challenging to readers. Also note what layouts or formats are most often used in the sharing of information. After noting the strengths and weaknesses of the different almanacs, create a checklist of dos and don'ts for constructing a quality almanac.
2. Themes or topics that lend themselves to an original almanac are your family, classroom, school, or community. Other possibilities for the almanac focus on a given subject area such as space travel in science or population figures of major cities in social studies.
3. To begin an original almanac, ask a series of questions that require some data gathering. If you were writing a classroom almanac, the questions might be:  
 What is the average height of students in our classroom?  
 How many pages a week do the students in our class read?  
 What are the hobbies of the students?  
 How many hours a week do members of our class watch television?
4. Once you have decided the questions, it's time to collect answers and compile and record them in an interesting, manageable way using charts, graphs, diagrams, pictures, and text.
5. Consider using spreadsheets to facilitate the calculations and publication of the data; some spreadsheets allow charts and graphs to be made from the entered data.
6. To add variety and interest, place some quotations, proverbs, jokes, riddles, words of wisdom, or anecdotes related to your topic throughout the almanac.
7. Finally, publish the almanac in booklet form, adding graphics, table of contents, title page, cover, and whatever additional pages are needed. Consider how the final product might be shared.

## Assessing

Using the checklist you made after critiquing almanacs, assess the qualities of your published almanac. How does it stack up against “the real thing?” Determine what things are best about your almanac and what things you would improve if you were making an almanac again.

## Technology Connection

1. A digital version of an almanac could be created on a class wiki. The almanac makers could list the topics they want to address, and contributors to the almanac could enter their information, which would be tallied or summarized by the almanac makers. The originators of each page would be responsible for ensuring that the information is accurate. The resulting almanac could be posted on the school website for other students, teachers, and parents to view.

Helpful websites are

*<http://pbworks.com/content/edu-classroom-teachers>*

*<http://docs.google.com>*

2. Use spreadsheets and electronic chart and graph tools to display your data to make it clearly understandable to the audience.