

II. Gather Background Information

Having background information on your topic will enable you to focus on a theme and an outline more effectively. As you peruse the background information, make note of relevant issues within your topic, differing issues and definitions of key concepts. Appropriate sources for locating background information include encyclopedias, almanacs and yearbooks, handbooks and bibliographies. In order to find information on the rain forest, you need to look for background resources in biological sciences. You may locate these sources by:

1. Searching the Library's online catalog under the subject heading *Encyclopedias and Dictionaries*. From the entries retrieved, you will choose the relevant ones.
2. Noting the appropriate classification numbers for specific resources or resources in the subject area and locate them in the appropriate reference section.
3. Advancing your search by searching by keyword and combining terms in general areas such as ecology, biology, life sciences, environmental science with such words as encyclopedia, dictionary, etc.

Resources that provide background information include:

1. Encyclopedias

General

Britannica Online: <http://www.tnstate.edu/library/database/htm#B>

Encyclopedia Americana: Ref AE5 .E333 1996

Specialized

Cambridge Encyclopedia of Life Sciences: Ref QH307.2 C36 1985

Concise Encyclopedia of Biology: Ref QH302.5 A2313 1996

Encyclopedia of the biological sciences: Ref QH302.5

2. Dictionaries

General

Random House Webster's Dictionary: Ref PE1628 .R294 2001

Specialized

Cambridge Illustrated Dictionary of Natural History: Ref QH13 .56
1987

Dictionary of Biology: QH302.5 .I534 1999

Elsevier's Dictionary of Biology: QH302.5 .I534 1999F

3. Almanacs and Yearbooks

Annual Review of Cell and Developmental Biology: QH57 .A56

4. Handbooks and Bibliographies

Library Research Guide to Biology: Illustrated Search Strategy and Sources: Ref QH315 .K52