

What is the National Archives?



On the east side of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC, an inscription reads “This building holds in trust the records of our national life and symbolizes our faith in the permanency of our national institutions.” These 22 words get to the heart of what the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) does and why we do it.

The National Archives is a public trust that preserves for the American people the fullest record of our government and ensures continuing access to it. From the Declaration of Independence to the first White House web site, our records help to tell the story of America. Our holdings include billions of textual documents; millions of still photographs; hundreds of thousands of reels of motion picture film and sound recordings; millions of maps, architectural drawings, and aerial photographs; and extensive electronic records.

Our web site at www.archives.gov offers a wealth of information about our resources, programs, and services.

What can educators do with the online resources from the National Archives?

1. Learn more about our Charters of Freedom (the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights) <http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/charters.html>
2. Sign the *Declaration of Independence*: http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/declaration_join_the_signers.html
3. Use the lesson plans from the *Teaching With Documents* section of the Digital Classroom: <http://www.archives.gov/education/index.html>
4. Introduce students to document analysis using NARA’s *Document Analysis Worksheets*: <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/>
5. Learn about 100 milestone documents from American history on the Our Documents web site. <http://www.ourdocuments.gov>
6. Learn about the Presidents and the American presidency from our Presidential Libraries’ sites <http://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/>
7. Make plans to visit one of the many National Archives facilities around the country and conduct research, schedule a workshop, or plan a class trip. <http://www.archives.gov/locations/>

8. Find out what the Boeing Learning Center has to offer and reserve a session for full classes in the *Constitution in Action* Learning Lab.
<http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/visit/learning-center.html>
9. If you cannot visit in person, you can find out how to schedule a videoconference with us. <http://www.archives.gov/education/workshops/electronic.html>
10. Find out how to participate in Primarily Teaching, our summer institute for teachers <http://www.archives.gov/education/primarily-teaching/>
11. Incorporate images of documents from the *Online Exhibit Hall*, *Digital Classroom*, *Our Documents*, and the *Archival Research Catalog* (ARC) into Power Point presentations or overhead transparencies for focus activities:
 - Exhibit Hall: <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/>
 - Digital Classroom: <http://www.archives.gov/education/>
 - Our Documents: <http://www.ourdocuments.gov>
 - ARC: <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>
12. Develop lesson plans using digitized images of documents from the site and the *Teaching With Documents* lesson plan format:
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/>
13. Encourage students to conduct research, getting started with the “Beginning Research Activities.” <http://www.archives.gov/education/research/beginning-activities.html>
14. Develop a school or classroom archives using suggestions from “*Establishing a School Archives*”: <http://www.archives.gov/about/history/building-an-archives/school-archives.html>
15. Encourage students to search the ARC database for documents related to research topics: <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>
16. Get information on guided tours and public programs offered at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC: <http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/visit/visit.html>
17. Learn about professional development opportunities and educational publications:
 - Growing Professionally:
<http://www.archives.gov/education/growing-professionally.html>
 - Educational Publications: <http://www.archives.gov/education/related-pubs.html>
18. Find out about grants that are available from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to collect, preserve, and publish documents that are important to understanding American history. <http://www.archives.gov/nhprc/>

And more