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Oklahoma
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Oklahoma History Center Museum

Crossroads of Commerce Economic Sectors Activity

Economic activities (making money) fall into categories based on how far they are from the natural environment. The four sectors (sections of the total economy) are often called “primary,” “secondary,” “tertiary” (that means ‘third layer’), and “quaternary” (meaning ‘fourth layer’).

Here is how each sector makes money:

- **Primary**—from resources taken from or grown in the earth.
Example: farming
- **Secondary**—from taking resources and making those resources into something else.
Example: Making auto parts in a factory
- **Tertiary**—from performing a service for others.
Example: Housecleaning, accounting
- **Quaternary**—from learning and coming up with new ideas.
Example: Inventing a new machine

A quick way to figure out what sector an activity is to think about whether the activity:

- **Takes** it from the ground (primary)
- **Makes** it from other materials (secondary)
- **Does** something for other people (tertiary)
- **Thinks** new ideas for the future (quaternary)

As you go through the **Crossroads of Commerce** exhibit, look for different ways people made money. Decide what box the activity belongs in. Your teacher will tell you how many total economic activities you need. Your teacher might also ask you to note when the activity began in Oklahoma. While there are some right and wrong answers, some answers might fit in more than one box. If you are unsure about an answer, add it to the “Unsure” box and explain why it is confusing.



Superior Feed Mills, Oklahoma City, 1944

(21412.M613.16, Z.P. Meyers/Barney Hillerman Photographic Collection, OHS)

Economic Sectors

Primary

Secondary

Tertiary

Quaternary

Analysis

Does one sector have more entries than the others?

Does the time period affect which sector has more entries? Why might that be?

An economy with many entries across all sectors is called “diversified.” Is Oklahoma’s economy diversified?

Which economic activities are things you might like to do for a living?