

Tapas for Success: An Information Source Sampler for Critical Thinking

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NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

The Information Source Sampler activity serves to introduce first-year students to a spectrum of sources they might find during the research process and encourages critical thinking around source credibility, bias, and information need. This one-shot activity builds upon a pre-class tutorial covering basic catalog searching and introducing scholarly information. While this activity was presented on a larger scale to more than 1,200 students in 76 classes over a three-week period, it can be adapted to a variety of class sizes, disciplines, and research topics.

COOKING TIME

30 minutes, serving 20 students in small groups. Cooking time may increase or decrease depending upon class and group size.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- The primary objective of this activity is to generate discussion and critical thinking about information sources.
- Students will be able to discuss and identify authorship and bias, different source types, and how information can be used.

DIETARY GUIDELINES

- This activity addresses the Authority is Constructed and Contextual frame from the ACRL *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*.

INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

- Worksheet or online form for resource evaluation with questions asking students to consider source type, author trustworthiness, and information need.
- 1 class research question
- 5–6 different sources, 1 for each group. Sources should be related to the class research question.
- Computer access for each group (optional)
- Bibliography of sources and discussion talking points for library instructor
- Handout introducing the research process and characteristics of scholarly information

PREPARATION

- Select a research question around a current event or relevant class topic and locate 5–6 different sources related to this question. Special attention should be paid to “hot topics” for increased engagement and variety of informa-

tion sources. Sources should include a spectrum of media, trustworthiness, and research value in order to drive in-class discussion. Source examples include a book, book chapter, bibliography, scholarly journal article, trade journal article, magazine article, blog post, radio or news transcript, TED talk, editorial, or Wikipedia article.

- Gather or print these sources if a computer is not available to make them accessible for in-class use.
- Create a bibliography of sources and talking points for the class instructor to highlight that are relevant to the class worksheet.

COOKING METHOD

1. Introduce students to the exercise by providing a quick overview to the class about the characteristics of scholarly information and elements of the research process.
2. Supply students with a relevant handout and distribute one source and a worksheet to each group.
3. Give students sufficient time to evaluate their group’s source and complete the worksheet. Circulate to encourage group discussion and offer activity clarity.

4. Re-convene as a class and begin discussion. Ask groups to present their findings to the class using worksheet discussion questions, which include:
 - a. What type of material did you have?
 - b. When would you use it during the research process?
 - c. If it is not of more scholarly quality, what would make it stronger or more scholarly?
 - d. Did the author present any bias? How did you determine this?
5. Reiterate the importance of selecting sources for quality and information need.

ALLERGY WARNINGS

A “wildcard source” can be used allowing students to search and select their own source related to the research question, although at times this was found to be more time-consuming and somewhat confusing.

CHEF'S NOTES

- Highlighting differences in information sources, such as the purpose of editorials versus articles and authority in websites versus books adds extra spice to the activity.
- The activity could be assessed by scoring completed worksheets with a rubric, but be sure to use source identifiers on the worksheet for a successful assessment.
- If using links and online forms for sources and worksheet information, use shortened, distinct URLs to decrease cooking time and enhance assessment capabilities.

Figure 1. A class research question, related sources, and bibliography of sources and discussion talking points.

