Credible Sources on the Internet: What to Trust, What to Dismiss and When to Cite a Source
Developed by Catherine Hartman

Resources

Select extracts from two or three of these articles from *Mind/Shift,* KQED's educational technology blog, depending upon the level and focus of the class.

- Three Trends That Will Shape the Future of Curriculum
- Shmoop's Online Content Focuses on Fun
- Scitable Goes Mobile
- College Professors and Students Jump into the Wiki World
- How the Internet Affects Plagiarism

Additional Resources

- News Literacy: How to Teach Students to Search Smart

Context/Critical Issue

Navigating the digital world is proving to be a daunting task with the advent of new media. Students need the skills to discern what is valid from the abundance of information on the Internet. They need to develop critical thinking skills to look with a discerning eye at this information and assess credible and reliable sources.

Two questions are central in this lesson.
1. How can you determine what is valid and reliable information on the Internet?
2. Should you be skeptical when choosing information to include in a research paper?

Preview Activities – Option 1

1. Ask students to discuss the following questions and issues.

- What online sources do you use for research papers?
- How would you know which sources are reliable? Give examples.
- What criteria do you use to determine this?

2. Ask students to free write for 5-10 minutes on the challenges they face when doing research. For instance, how do they go about beginning a search for the material they need?

3. Group activity: Assign a topic area (environment, health, food) and direct students to look at different social media sites and compare sources for credibility.

Vocabulary Exercise

From [Three Trends That Will Shape the Future of Curriculum](#)
Introduce and discuss key vocabulary before students read the *Mind/Shift* article.

Word	Meaning/Example of Usage
deluge	
multi-tasking	
open-source	
network	
navigate	
quest	
innovation	
critical thinking	
collaborate	
momentum	

Focus Questions

Distribute copies of the article [News Literacy: How to Teach Students to Search Smart](#). Working in small groups, ask students to respond to the article by answering the following questions.

1. When searching the Internet for information for an assignment, how can you distinguish between factual information, personal opinion, a personal blog, gossip or advertising?
2. Discuss the following statement about Wikipedia's vision: "Imagine a world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge." Can you trust Wikipedia?
3. List ways to determine the factual basis or veracity of the information you want to include when doing research.

Post Reading Activities

Distribute examples of blogs, Wikipedia sites and articles from online texts and have students compare information. Ask them to distinguish fact and opinion and how they can tell the difference.

Preview Activities - Option 2

In the Mind/Shift article, [How the Internet Affects Plagiarism](#) Audrey Watters discusses plagiarism and the digital world. Prepare for the reading by introducing students to key vocabulary from the article.

Working in pairs, ask them to complete the following vocabulary exercise identifying POS (parts of speech) and definitions. Review and check answers as a whole class

Word	Part of Speech	Definition
plagiarism		
cheating		
legitimate		
citation		
(to) gear		
dishonest		
benefit		

Focus Questions

Working in the same groups, encourage students to respond to questions raised in the article while one student takes notes on the group's ideas.

1. What is plagiarism?
2. Why is plagiarism a challenge in this digital age of open-source material?
3. How can you avoid plagiarism?

Discuss responses with the whole class the following questions.

Discussion Question - Critical Thinking

Have students discuss the concept of plagiarism as it relates to their own culture.
- Is this an acceptable practice? Why or why not?
- What are the consequences for using another person's words without crediting them in your country?

Online Extension Activity

Initiate a class blog with your students for the semester discussing issues they have encountered related to gathering information for research and how to avoid plagiarizing material. What have they learned about how to cite sources?