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## Identifying and Diluting the Dominant Flavor of a Source

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# Identifying and Diluting the Dominant Flavor of a Source

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## NUTRITION INFORMATION

Students prioritize the wrapper of a source (i.e., the type, who published it and a conflation of the significance of a source being scholarly versus being peer-reviewed) as its “dominant flavor” to determine its credibility. Our lesson challenges this limited definition by placing sources within the context in which they will be used by emphasizing the elements of Bizup’s BEAM Method (Background, Exhibit, Argument, and Method) within the given scenarios. Students will be introduced to the BEAM Method, which focuses on the use of the source rather than the type of source. The lesson also amplifies other credibility factors such as bias, what audience the source was written for, and time frame, and encourages students to break down and construct their *own* meanings of scholarly and peer review.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Articulate different aspects—author, publisher, date—and integrate these aspects into a comprehensive evaluation; students learn that one aspect alone does not define value.
- Students examine a source of information to determine the point of view in order to interpret bias.
- Identify the usefulness as well as the limitations of unmediated sources (i.e., social media, blogs) in order to use them when appropriate.

## COOKING TIME

30 minutes of in-class activity

## NUMBER SERVED

Ideal for a small class of 15–20 students

## Dietary Guidelines

ACRL Framework:

- Authority is Constructed and Contextual
- Information Creation as a Process

## INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

- Stack of blank index cards
- Three sources
- Six research scenarios
- Six sets of “credibility factor” cards

## PREPARATION

- Print, cut, and collate credibility factor cards.
- Locate sources and write research scenarios.

## COOKING METHOD

1. Students start by writing down three ways in which they evaluate sources on an index card and then put this aside.
2. Students are broken into six groups and given a source and a research scenario for which they will recommend if it should or should not be used. Each source is assigned to two groups for a total of three sources. There are six distinct scenarios. Sample sources might be:
  - ◇ A book written by an academic scholar and published by a scholarly press, but on a subject outside the scholar’s area of expertise provides a personal reaction to the content and could be an exhibit source. It isn’t, however, an appropriate argumentative source.
  - ◇ An article that isn’t research but is a review article is good for background research. Or an article that is good for leading students to the types of sources they need isn’t necessarily

Figure 1. Credibility Factor Cards

Scholarly	Peer-Reviewed	Date of Publication	Publisher	Author
Bias	Language	Sources Cited	Audience	Cited By

good in a scenario where original research is needed to provide methods.

- ◇ A popular blog post that only references a study published in a peer-reviewed academic journal doesn't present as an original exhibit source.

3. To help the groups identify and use other credibility factors ("ingredients") they are provided with a stack of cards that each list one factor. They are then challenged to place them in red, yellow, and green categories depending on the level of importance of each factor given the scenario. The groups report out their recommendations and the discussion includes the importance of the context in deciding if the source is credible enough to use.
4. At the end of the session, students go back to their index card and write a new "recipe" for new ways of thinking about how they evaluate a source.

### ALLERGY WARNING

If the faculty member has not adopted BEAM terminology so everyone is using a common language, students are likely to be confused and/or frustrated.

### CHEF'S NOTES

In lieu of cards, one could use a flipped classroom approach to conduct the first pieces of this activity in Articulate or a course management system and facilitate the discussion in class.

You can assess the index card submissions by looking for changes in the students' thinking

about how to evaluate usability of sources in the context of different scenarios. Ideally, the second iteration of the card will emphasize context over the "wrapper" criterion.

### NOTES

Bizup, Joseph, "BEAM: A Rhetorical Vocabulary for Teaching Research-Based Writing," *Rhetoric Review* 27, no. 1 (2008): 72–86. *JSTOR Complete*.