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.

Figure 1. Credibility Factor Cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholarly</th>
<th>Peer-Reviewed</th>
<th>Date of Publication</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bias</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Sources Cited</td>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Cited By</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION I. CONSUMING INFORMATION

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.

NOTES