

FINDING THE BEST SOURCE (about Hot Dogs)

Grades K-5 (15 minutes for K-1; 45-60 minutes for grades 2-5, depending on number of media documents analyzed – possible to split into multiple shorter sessions)

By analyzing different types of media sources (a poem in a book, a corporate website, a Wikipedia entry, a product package, and an infographic) students will gain an understanding that reliability or credibility isn't the only thing that makes a source "good" or useful. We use different types of sources for different purposes, so rather than try to create a fantasy world where all sources are only "good" or "bad," we look at whether a source is useful for our current task.

This approach helps students develop the type of complex thinking skills they need to successfully navigate a world in which our digital and physical lives are increasingly intertwined.

Students will learn

- To distinguish between types of media sources, including distinguishing between fact and opinion
- That different types of media sources are useful for different purposes
- Sources that aren't non-fiction (including art and advertising) can include useful and sometimes factual, but if we're looking for facts, there may be better choices
- To value their existing knowledge and use media documents to build on what they know

Students will practice

- Selecting the best source for particular goals
- Making careful observations, including compare and contrast
- Discussion & listening skills
- Linking answers to evidence
- checking media information for accuracy

Materials: a way to record a student-created list (e.g., chart paper or a shared digital board); for older students, be prepared to teach them where/how they would find facts about hot dogs in your library and have those resources ready for them to use in Step 3; optional: [Share, Challenge, Report, Skip handout](#)

Images

Dear Hot Dog by Mordicai Gerstein – [slide #32](#)

Hotdog package – [slide #33](#)

NHDSC Web Page with Consumption Stats – [slide #34](#)

Wikipedia Entry – [slide #36](#)

Infographic – [slide #37](#)

Step 1

Tell students that they are going to learn about different types of information sources by looking at sources that tell us things about hot dogs. We'll especially be looking for sources that provide facts. And we'll start with what we already know.

Ask, *Let's make a list of everything we know about hot dogs. What should be on our list?* Generate a short list of responses. Record responses in a way that the group can review.

Together, review the list and for each item ask: Is this fact or opinion (or something else – e.g., it's information, but you're not sure if it's accurate, so it might not be a fact). For the youngest students, you may need to define the terms (e.g., facts are things we can prove are true and they're true for everyone; opinions are things we believe based on evidence, but others might disagree with our interpretation of the evidence; beliefs are things we feel or think are true but are impossible to prove, like "I believe ketchup is better on hot dogs than mustard").

Invite students to correct any overgeneralizations (e.g., "all hot dogs are red" is not true, but "some hot dogs are red" is a fact).

Segue to the next step by asking: *There's a lot we already know about hot dogs. Is there anything else we might want to know?* If they have no suggestions (which is rare), wonder about history, or if everyone everywhere eats hot dogs, or how many hot dogs Americans eat each year. Choose a question or two from the list that would have a factual answer and tell students they're going to review different sources to see if they are good choices to find the answer (and if not, why not). In selecting questions, try to avoid duplicating the questions posed in Step 3.

Step 2

Introduce students to the media examples, one at a time.

Recommended: K-1 use only two documents, the poem and hot dog package



For 2-4, choose 3 or more of the documents (Note: You could start with two documents and then, in separate sessions, add in more to expand and practice)

Together, review each, making sure students understand what the source is. Ask, *Based on what this is, do you think this type of source will have the answer we're looking for?*

Engage students in a compare and contrast to consider the source's strengths and limitations as a source of information about hot dogs. They'll probably want to talk about hot dogs, but keep guiding the discussion back to understanding what type of document(s) they are examining.

Note: None of the examples is false. It will, however be important to note details like HotDog.org is a corporate "blog" even though it is a .org. And the NHDSC is a meat industry trade organization, which means they represent the people who make hot dogs.

For K-1, continue by asking, *What else did you learn about hot dogs from each source?* Help them notice the types of information that are included one source that are absent from the other. Also be sure to discuss the information conveyed in the images, not just the words or numbers.

For this age group, the activity ends at this point. For older students, continue with Step 3.

Step 3

Guide students in a deeper dive. Allow students to examine the documents. Ask the appropriate grade level prompts. The analysis can be done as small group work or

with the entire class. In all cases, be sure to prompt for evidence after every response.

For all grades ask: *Which of these sources gives information that is fact? Opinion?*

2-3

- *What's inside a hot dog (what are the ingredients)? What's the best source to find out? Why did you pick that source?*
- *What would happen to you if you only ate hot dogs? What's the best source to find out? Why did you pick that source?*
- *Did you pick the same source for each question? If not, why not?*

4-5

- *Which sources present information that is verifiable? How could you check the accuracy?*
- *Who invented the hot dog? Which of these is the best source to find out? Why do you think so?*
- *What do people like to put on their hot dogs? Is it the same everywhere? Which of these is the best source to find out? Why do you think so?*
- *How many hot dogs do Americans eat each year? (Is that a lot or a little?) How about people in other countries? Which of these is the best source to find out? Why do you think so?*

Use a class review of each answer to reinforce the pros and cons of each document as an information source.

Step 4

Give students time to find and share answers to their questions.

Optional: For extra practice, discuss which sources the students would share, challenge, report, or skip if they encountered them in a social media post. If needed, provide the Share, etc. handout as a reminder of the options.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Have students conduct a survey to find out: What are the favorite hot dog toppings of people in our school? Then help them figure out how to accurately represent the data they collected. [Math]

Have students write and share their own poem about hot dogs or other favorite food. Take note of the adjectives each poet uses and compare/contrast them with adjectives typically used in food ads. [ELA]

Engage students in researching what would happen to a person who ate only hot dogs (or... what would happen to us if the cafeteria only ever served hot dogs for lunch?). Help them annotate the sources where they found credible information and what made those sources credible. [Health, Science]

Coordinate with the cafeteria to serve hot dogs, including signs with a guessing game about how many hot dogs students consume each school year. Follow up by inviting the cafeteria workers to share the correct answer. Discuss with students whether the cafeteria manager who orders the food is a reliable source for statistics on school hot dog consumption.

AASL Standards Correlations

- A. I. 1. Formulating questions about a personal interest or curricular topic.
- A. II. 2. Adopting a discerning stance toward points of view and opinions expressed in information resources and learning products.
- A. IV. 3 Making choices about information sources to use.
- A. VI. 3. Evaluating information for accuracy, validity, social and cultural context, and appropriateness for need.

- B. I. 1. Using evidence to investigate questions.
- B. III. 1. Using a variety of communication tools and resources.

- C. II. 2. Contributing to discussions in which multiple viewpoints on a topic are expressed.
- C. V. 3. Expressing curiosity about a topic of personal interest or curricular relevance.

- D. I. 3. Enacting new understanding through real world connections.
- D. III. 1. Actively contributing to group discussions.
- D. IV. 1. Performing ongoing analysis of and reflection on the quality, usefulness, and accuracy of curated resources.
- D. VI. 3. Inspiring others to engage in safe, responsible ethical and legal information behaviors.