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## READING STRATEGIES

## ORAL COMMUNICATION

> **These instructional approaches are for use by teacher-librarians as they work in the school resource centre or in classrooms with students and their teachers.**

# Getting Ready to Read: Previewing a Text

## Evaluating Resources for Usefulness

A well-designed textbook, website or other print resource has a variety of elements or features that are applied consistently to help the reader locate and use the material. Some texts have more of these features, and clearer clues, than others do. Previewing a course text can help students to identify the text features and use them efficiently.

**Purpose**
- Learn how to navigate subject-specific textbooks and resources.
- Examine the layout and features of a particular text, and how to use it.

**Payoff**
Students will:
- become familiar with different course texts and resources (print and electronic).
- use strategies for effectively previewing and locating information in different texts, using the table of content, indices and /or navigation bar.

**Tips and Resources**
- When giving assignments and projects, consider that students need to have choice in selecting appropriate resources.  This is empowering but can also be frustrating for students if they do not know how to judge if a text is suitable for them.
- Students should be aware of their own personal preferences and their independent reading level.
- Teach students how to preview a text and use the text features to predict if the resource will meet their information needs and match their personal reading tastes.
- Students need to develop personal selection criteria for evaluating texts for information tasks and independent reading. The criteria will assist each student to find the resources that are most useful for the assigned tasks.
- Practise previewing text with all types of texts (e.g., videos, websites, print sources: magazines, newspapers, books).
- Share with students your own personal schema for knowing when a book or other text is just right for your need. Model a think aloud as you skim and scan a text.
- To ensure that students can find their "just right resource", they must have ready access and exposure to a diverse collection of reading materials in the school library, in the classroom and in their community.
- Review these sites for more ideas on helping students evaluate web resources for usefulness:
    - Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators: Critical Evaluation Information
      http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/eval.html
    - The Good the Bad and the Ugly
      http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/eval.html
    - Knowing What's What and What's Not: the 5 W's (and 1 "H") of Cyberspace
      http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/special_initiatives/wa_resources/wa_shared/tipsheets/5Ws_of_cyberspace.cfm

  *Build Your Own Information Literate School* pp.34-39.

**Further Support**
- Provide multiple opportunities to consolidate knowledge, to practise and to understand concepts and key ideas.

## Getting Ready to Read: Previewing a Text

### Evaluating Resources for Usefulness

| What teachers do | What students do |
|---|---|
| **Before**<br>• Design the information assignment or project for which students need to find resources.<br>• Present the assignment.<br>• Inform students they must find their own suitable reading materials.<br>• Model your approach to selecting an information text. Use a think aloud strategy to model for students how you critique based on suitability of text for the purpose.<br>• Book time in the school library for students to search for resources. Whenever possible, work with the teacher-librarian to plan strategies to:<br>   - review types of information resources and where to find them.<br>   - review search strategies.<br>   - review features of information text. | • Understand the assignment parameters.<br><br><br><br><br>• Understand where to find all types of resources.<br>• Develop a repertoire of search strategies.<br>• Understand features of text. |
| **During**<br>• When students have found several resources to support their topic, put them in groups.<br>• Instruct the groups to examine all the collected resources and discuss why they find them useful.<br>• Have groups record their criteria for usefulness.<br>• Share with the class and chart. Cluster similar ideas. Add criteria the students may have missed, such as:<br>   - readability<br>   - aids to assist with navigation<br>   - visual appeal<br>   - currency of the resource<br>   - author's credibility<br>   - targets information needed<br>   - supported by further resources<br>   - reviews/synopsis on back cover<br>   - amount of text on a page | • Demonstrate their ability to apply search strategies and location skills.<br>• Skim and scan for usability using features of text.<br>• Articulate such ideas as: Can I read this? Can I understand this? Are there pictures and other visuals to help me? Can I find things easily? Is there an index and/or glossary? Is it interesting to look at? Are there good examples? Is the print too small? Will this help with my research?<br>• Examine all information texts with a critical lens.<br>• Brainstorm criteria for assessing the value of their collective resources in meeting the needs of the assignment.<br>• Share group criteria.<br>• Help cluster ideas and develop a list of common criteria. |
| **After**<br>• Reinforce by:<br>   - providing bookmarks that remind students to focus on need and personal suitability when selecting an information text. See Student Resource, *Check Your Information Need.*<br>   - asking students to develop their own personal "look fors" when choosing a text. This might also take the form of a bookmark.<br>   - having students enhance their reference list by giving their selected texts a rating based on their personal selection criteria. | • Develop a personal tool for evaluating the usefulness of a resource.<br><br>• Rate each text used in the assignment based on their own personal selection criteria. |

# Check Your Information Need

## Web Check

**Evaluate the website you are browsing by asking yourself these questions.**

- ❑ Is the site attractive and inviting?

- ❑ Is the site at a good reading level for me?

- ❑ Are there useful special features like maps, charts, videos, and sound?

- ❑ Is the content easily searchable by subject or keyword?

- ❑ Are there links to other good sites and/or related resources?

- ❑ Is the site free of obvious bias?

- ❑ Will this site be useful for your project? Why? or Why not?

Good Site? **Jot down the URL or bookmark** to your favorites file on the computer so you can get back to it easily for research and referencing.

## Information Check

**Looking for quick facts?**
- ❑ dates
- ❑ statistics
- ❑ places
- ❑ people

**Try**
- ❑ atlas
- ❑ almanac
- ❑ encyclopedia
- ❑ yearbooks

**Need something for a project?**
- ❑ Search the catalogue using keywords.

- ❑ Check the table of contents and index for your keywords.

- ❑ Skim for headings, sub-headings and captions.

- ❑ Check for illustrations, charts, maps and other visuals related to your research need.

- ❑ Too difficult/easy or not interested? Try another resource.

**Perfect?  Check it out!**

Adapted from *Build Your Own Information Literate School.* Hi-Willow Research and Publishing 2003.

**R**

# Modelling Independent Reading: Read Aloud
### Grades 7-9

Teachers in all subject areas read aloud to the class or to groups of students.  Reading aloud can be used as both an introduction to a reading assignment and as part of the introduction to a lesson or unit.

**Purpose**
- Model fluent reading.
- Model chunking as a way of achieving meaning.
- Encourage prediction through questioning.
- Develop listening skills.
- Introduce students to new genres and types of texts.

**Payoff**
Students will:
- develop an understanding that reading has many purposes.
- develop a variety of skills to read independently, making meaning of texts across the curriculum.
- increase comprehension skills by identifying links to their own lives and earlier learning.
- develop a sense of text/story organization.

**Tips and Resources**
- Read something aloud every day from a textbook or related material (e.g., biographies, newspaper or magazine articles, manuals, poems, short stories).
- Use fiction or non-fiction ensuring that the material helps students to see links between upcoming learning and earlier learning and/or students' lives and experiences.
- Read aloud particularly complex or dense passages of text that students will return to for independent reading.
- Vary the read-aloud strategies (e.g., read the first portion of a text that the students will be assigned for independent reading and ask students to retell, relate, make links, etc.).
- Use picture books with adolescent readers (e.g., the picture book titled *Weslandia*, by Paul Fleischman, is the story about a young boy who is bullied, but who is inspired enough by a summer project to create an agrarian domain that stops his tormentors in their tracks. *Weslandia* can be used as a read aloud in: Geography, Environmental Studies, Mathematics, Science, Healthy Active Living, Language Arts, Visual Arts, and Choices Into Action).
- Compile a list of read-aloud material relevant to the curriculum area(s). See Teacher Resource, *Cross Curricular Read Alouds for the Middle Years,* for some book titles to get you started. Consult your school library and/or teacher-librarian, for further titles and resources.
- See:
  - *Read It Aloud* by Judy Richardson
  - Looking Critically at Picture Books http://www.carolhurst.com/su bjects/criticalpicture.html
  - Reading aloud to students http://www.ncsd.k12.pa.us/pssa/Reading/readloud.htm

**Further Support**
- Post and discuss subject specific vocabulary prior to reading.
- Assist students to make links to their lives and the real world.

**R**

## Modelling Independent Reading: Read Aloud

### Grade 7-9

| What teachers do | What students do |
|---|---|
| **Before**<br>• Choose material for reading aloud that will engage students and provide learning links to the area of study (e.g., biographies, newspaper or magazine articles, manuals, poems, short stories or a sophisticated picture book). See Teacher Resource, *Cross-Curricular Read Alouds for the Middle Years.*<br>• Prepare and post questions that require students to make predictions, link the content to their own lives, and link content to earlier learning.  See Teacher Resource, *Generic Questions for Read Aloud.*<br>• Research any relevant information that may provide additional links to learning e.g., further explanation of concepts, historical context, the author's life, his/her purpose in writing the text.<br>• Prepare the read aloud in order to model chunking of text and good reading skills: expression, volume, enunciation, and emphasis.  (See Teacher Resource, *Go Ahead, Have a Cow*.)<br>• Structure the read aloud activity to take no more than 10 to 15 minutes. | |
| **During**<br>• Introduce the read aloud material and explain any relevant background.<br>• Remind students to listen attentively.<br>• Read the material with expression and energy and model reading strategies such as re-reading, sounding out words, slowing down, sub-vocalizing.<br>• Stop at planned points in the read aloud to discuss with students.   Consider asking students to:<br>  - retell what they have heard.<br>  - use context to guess word meaning.<br>  - paraphrase what they have heard.<br>  - relate to what they have heard.<br>  - reflect on what they have heard.<br>  - describe aspects of what they have heard.<br>  - predict what will happen next.<br>  - make links between the read aloud material and earlier class learning.<br>  - discuss style, purpose, audience and form.<br>• Ask students to discuss the benefit of hearing text read aloud. | • Listen to the teacher modeling read aloud strategies.<br><br>• Listen to the teacher modeling strategies for making meaning of text.<br><br>• Respond to teacher's prompts and share ideas and answers.<br><br>• Share benefits of read aloud. |
| **After**<br>• Ask students to continue reading independently, asking themselves the same questions posed during the read aloud.<br>• Instruct students to record their thinking on sticky notes, jot dot sheets, or information organizers. | • Apply these strategies as they read independently. |

**Notes**

Teacher Resource

# Cross-Curricular Read Alouds for the Middle Years

Angelou, Maya. *Life Doesn't Frighten Me at All.* New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1993.
This unique book is composed of a powerful combination of inspiring verse and intense paintings working together to provide courage and optimism for the reader. Guidance, Family Studies, Choices into Action, English, Language

Bannatyne-Cugnet, Jo. *From Far and Wide: A Canadian Citizenship Scrapbook.* Toronto: Tundra Books, 2000.
This documentary type picture book gives us a glimpse of a family becoming Canadian citizens. History, Canadian and World Studies, Dramatic Arts, English, Language, Social Science and the Humanities

Bunting, Eve. *Fly away home*. New York: Clarion Books, 1991.
Andrew and his father are a homeless family living in airport terminals but still confronting the same challenges as all families. Dramatic Arts, Social Science and the Humanities, English, Language, Business Studies

Bunting, Eve. *Riding the Tiger*. New York: Clarion Books, 2001.
Stong text and dark woodcut illustrations set the stage for a provocative exploration of bullying and gangs. English, Language, Dramatic Arts, Social Science and the Humanities, Guidance

Cronin, Doreen and Betsy Lewin. *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.
This colourful book is a hilarious romp through a farmyard ripe with labour disputes. English, Language, Business Studies, Dramatic Arts, Technology Education, Choices into Action

DiTerlizzi, Tony. *The Spider and the Fly*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.
This is a sophisticated picture book bringing to life an old cautionary Howitt poem of 1829. Dramatic Arts, Media Studies, Science, English, Language

Garland, Michael. *Icarus Swinebuckle.* Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co., 2000.
Those who believe in dreams and determination will appreciate this comic spoof of the legend of Icarus. Science, Dramatic Arts, English, Language, Choices into Action

Gerstein, Mordicai. *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers*. Brookfield CT: Roaring Brook Press/Millbrook Press, 2003.
This award winning picture book captures a haunting and breathtaking view of an aerialist's quest to conquer the twin towers in 1974. Canadian and World Studies, English, Language, Media Studies, Science

Lewis, J. Patrick. *The Last Resort*. Mankato, MN: Creative Editions, 2002.
This picture book for older readers is a meandering tale of an artist in search of his lost imagination. The Arts, Dramatic Arts, Media Studies, English, Language

Littlechild, George. *This Land is My Land*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1993.
This powerful work creates an emotional journey through the history of the Cree Nation, scripted and painted in authentic voice by Vancouver artist George Littlechild. History and Geography, Canadian and World Studies, The Arts, Language, English, Science and the Humanities, Choices into Action

MacLeod, Elizabeth. *Albert Einstein: A Life of Genius.* Markham: ON: Kids Can Press, 2003.
Like a photo album, this interesting book invites revisits. Lots of solid fascinating information, supported by visuals take the reader along an historical journey of change. Science and Technology, English, Language, Dramatic Arts

Morrison, Toni and Giselle Potter. *The Big Box.* New York: Hyperion, 1999.
This story features three spirited children who are literally boxed in by adults who feel this discipline and confinement is protective. Choices into Action, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Dramatic Arts

Teacher Resource

## Cross-Curricular Read Alouds for the Middle Years cont'd

Muth, Jon J. *The Three Questions*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2002.
This sophisticated picture book, based on a story by Leo Tolstoy, explores some universal questions about life.
English, Language, Guidance and Careers, Choices into Action, Social Sciences and the Humanities

Thomson, Sarah L. and Rob Gonsalves. *Imagine a Night. New York:* Atheneum, 2003.
The surreal paintings by artist Rob Gonsalves will serve as natural catalysts to limitless creativity. Arts, English, Language, Dramatic Arts, Science

Say, Allen, *Grandfather's Journey.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.
Forces of push and pull are captured in this poignant tale of the immigrant experience. History and Geography, Canadian and World Studies, English, Language, Dramatic Arts

Scieszka, Jon. *Squids Will Be Squids:Fresh Morals and Beastly Fables*. New York: Viking, 1998.
Classic Scieszka delights in this hilarious romp of kid based fables. English, Language, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Choices into Action

Smith, David. *If the World Were a Village.* Markham ON: Kids Can Press, 2003.
This multifaceted work simplifies and at the same time exemplifies the complexities facing humanity today and in the future. Mathematics, History and Geography, Science, Social Sciences and the Humanities, Dramatic Arts

Wiesner, David. *Tuesday*. New York: Trumpet Club, 1992.
This award winner is a delightful springboard to limitless "What if?" scenarios. Science, Dramatic Arts, English, Language, Media Studies

Yee, Paul and Harvey Chan. *Ghost Train.* Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996.
This tale is a stirring tribute to the many Chinese who died building the railway in Canada. History, Canadian and World Studies, The Arts, English, Language

# Generic Questions for Read Aloud

**Before**
Based on the title, what do you think this article/text is about?
What springs to mind when you hear the title?
What do you already know about this topic/event/person?
What do you hope to find out about this topic?

**During**
What do you think _____ means in this article/text?  Why?
What is the author's purpose in writing this article/text?
With what do you think the rest of the article will deal?
Does the author seem unbiased in his/her views on the topic?  Why do you think as you do?
What is the audience for this article/text?  Why do you think so?
Is the style formal or informal?  What evidence do you have?
How is _____ like/different _____?
What are the strengths and weaknesses of _____?
Why has the author used statistics in this article? How do these statistics affect your reaction to the text?
Why has the author used quotations? How does the use of quotations affect your reaction to the text?
Why has the author used expert opinion? How does the use of expert opinion affect your reaction?
Why has the author used examples in this article/text?
What are the causes/effects of _____?
What are the potential positive/negative impacts of _____?
What are the possible ripple effects?
Whose views are presented? What are they?
Why does _____ believe _____?
Are there points of view missing? Whose?
How do you feel about the points of view the author opted to use?
Are we getting fact or opinion?
Can you identify any patterns or trends?
How does _____ relate to _____?
What questions came to mind as you listened?

**After**
What in the article/text do you find most interesting?
What in the article/text do you find confusing?
What is the main idea in this portion of the article/text?
What examples and supporting details has the author provided?
How has the author engaged or not engaged your interest?
What advice would you give the author at this point?
Why do you agree or disagree with what the author has written?
What examples from your experience of life support the author's view?
What examples from your experience of life oppose the author's view?
How has the author changed your way of thinking about this topic?
What does the author mean by_____?
What are the implications of _____?
Who or what will _____ influence?
Does_____ really matter? Why?
How can we use this information?
What is the importance of _____?
The most important thing about this article is_____
The main message is_____
What do you think about_____?
Make a prediction about_____
Suppose _____? What if_____?
How does this article affect your views on the topic?
In what way/s does this information impact on you? Why
If you could interview/email the author what would you say?
If you had the opportunity to challenge or react to the article what would you say?
If you wrote a letter to the editor regarding this article what would your main points be?
If you were asked to critique this article what would you say?

R

# Nutrition Lessons from the Simpsons?

This read aloud sample can be used for study in Healthy Active Living, Health and Physical Education, Family Studies, English Language Arts, and Media Studies.

**Before Reading**
- Do a quick brainstorming on what students know about Homer and Bart Simpson from The Simpsons television show.

- Read the title and ask students to respond:
    - What do you think Homer and Bart Simpson will be doing in an article about nutrition?

**During Reading**
- Read the first paragraph and ask students why the author writes that "nutritionists cringe".

- Read to the middle of paragraph two and stop at the end of the question. Write the question on the board: "Is The Simpsons, and television-watching in general, actually a bad influence on young viewers' ideas about healthy eating and exercise?"

- Survey the students' opinions using a thumbs-up/thumbs-down strategy.

- Ask students to consider the above question as you continue the read-aloud.

- Invite students to listen for evidence that supports their opinion.

- Read to the end of paragraph six. Ask students if anything in the information they have heard surprises them.

- Instruct students to re-read the question on the board, and predict how the article will address that question.

- Ask students recount the ways in which Bart's behaviour supports healthy, active living.

- Read to the end of paragraph nine.

- Ask students how and why the author uses contrast in paragraph ten.

- Ask students why the author has included the opinions of Alison Begley and Carol Byrd-Bredbenner.

- Finish reading the article.

**After Reading**
- Ask the students to re-read the question on the board and discuss the following:
    - What is the author's answer to the question?
    - How has the author supported his answer?
    - Has the author convinced the reader?

- Ask students to evaluate the effectiveness of the title, "Nutrition Lessons from the Simpsons?"

- Form small groups and ask each group to discuss how television shows and advertising have any impact on what they eat or on the nutritional patterns of others.

## Nutrition Lessons from the Simpsons?

*Research suggests that kids who imitate Bart – and avoid eating like Homer –
are developing healthy lifestyle habits.*

by Stephen Strauss, *The Globe and Mail*, November 29, 2003

On a typical day in Springfield, Homer Simpson scarfs doughnuts and chugs Duff Beer, Bart and his friend Milhouse suck on Super Squishies so sweet they produce sugary hallucinations – and parents and nutritionists cringe.  (1)

But is *The Simpsons*, and television-watching in general, actually a bad influence on young viewers' ideas about healthy eating and exercise?  Surprisingly, the answer is more positive than you might think.   (2)

Words praising the Simpsons as healthy-lifestyle role models came from an unlikely source recently:  Britain's Institute of Physics released an analysis of six episodes of the cartoon show and said that if kids identify with a Bart lifestyle, they probably have good eating and exercise habits.   (3)

"It was quite interesting, and surprising and a bit of fun to see how basically healthy Bart was," says Alison Begley, the researcher who did the analysis.  While some key information was missing from the study – how much Bart weighs and how tall he is, for starters – Ms. Begley concludes that "He eats reasonably well."  The study looked at Bart's overall energy input and output, and calculated that in a typical day, he consumes about 1,599 calories.  An average 10-year-old would take in somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000.  (4)

Moreover, despite his love for Squishies, Bart eats quite well and doesn't snack much.  The family eats a traditional dinner with meat, vegetable, mashed potatoes and water, while breakfast is typically fried eggs and orange juice, two slices of bacon and a slice of toast.  (5)

Studying lunch turned out to be trickier because that meal is generally omitted in the storyline, but what did appear was a lot of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and juice.  Given that Bart also spends what could be up to two hours skateboarding, tree-climbing, walking and doing other physical activities, Ms. Begly guesses that Bart is "quite healthy, although he would not be a top athlete."  (6)

Homer, who famously tried to boost his weight to more than 300 pounds in order to qualify for a disability allowance at work, is another matter.  His total caloric intake was estimated to be at least 3,107, much of it represented by fat.   (7)

But nutrition professor Carol Byrd-Bredbenner, is less enthusiastic about the popular show and its effects on eating habits.  In a soon-to-be-published paper, she has completed a much more detailed analysis of 63 episodes.   (8)

In 19 percent of cases, the message was positive, from a nutritionist's perspective.

"They eat dinner together, the portions don't look too outrageous, and they include some kind of protein, some green vegetables, usually a potato.  They almost always are drinking milk.  I think Marge is a pretty good mom in that sense," Prof Byrd-Bredbenner says.  (9)

Most children may not want to imitate Homer.  "He is a buffoon, and most people don't want to copy him, Prof. Byrd-Bredbenner says.  Only one of 30 children she has interviewed in an ongoing study said Homer was his/her favourite character.   (10)

"While we know what the programming on television is, we have no clear-cut data about how it affects behaviour," Prof. Byrd-Bredbenner says about the state of knowledge in the field.  (11)

Hard evidence of Bart's influence may not yet exist but, parental and professional pressure has forced changes in some programs.  *Sesame Street* recast the behaviour of its famous furry glutton, the Cookie Monster.  He now gorges not just on cookies but on zucchini, apples and the like.  (12)

**R**

**Reading Different Text Forms**: Reading Informational Texts

### Distinguishing Fact and Opinion

Information text forms (such as explanations, reports, news articles, magazine articles and instructions) are written to communicate information about a specific subject, topic, event or process. These texts use vocabulary, special design elements, and organizational patterns to express ideas clearly and make them easier to read. Providing students with an approach to reading informational texts helps them to become effective readers.

**Purpose**
- Become familiar with the elements and features of informational texts used in any course.
- Explore a process for reading informational texts, using a range of strategies for before, during and after reading.

**Payoff**
Students will:
- become more efficient at "mining" the text for information and meaning.
- practise essential reading strategies and apply them to different course-related materials.

**Tips and Resources**
- Many subject areas use magazines and newspapers to supplement course material and develop cross-curricular literacy skills. Magazines and newspapers are current, relevant and engaging for many readers.
- Newspapers and magazine articles are often the best source for regional current information about topics such as natural disasters, elections, safe drinking water, popular music, and book reviews. Visual formats found in magazines and newspapers, such as photographs, illustrations, maps and graphs, appeal to most readers, including reluctant readers, special needs and ESL students.
- Online periodical* databases provide vetted information on a variety topics and issues:
    - some are specialized databases focusing on a specific subject; others are broad, general databases that provide a whole range of journals, newspapers and magazines.
    - information is indexed and multiple search tools make it easy for students to find what they need.
- Ezines and other online resources integrate technology and provide cross-curricular literacy opportunities. These formats appeal to many students, from reluctant readers to gifted students because of their authenticity and immediacy. Some examples of ezines are:
    - MidLink Magazine http://www.ncsu.edu/midlink/call.htm
    - Taking it Global http://www.takingitglobal.org/home.html?width=800
    - Free the Children http://freethechildren.org
- Determining fact and opinion is critical to teaching and learning in History, Geography, Canadian and World Studies, and Social Sciences and the Humanities. The following article provides additional background and strategies. *Distinguishing between Fact and Opinion - "A One Size Fits All" Process for Grades 6-0AC* http://www.ohassta.org/pdf/mowatt.pdf

*Cross Curricular Literacy for Improving Middle level Students' Reading and Writing Skills, Gr. 6-8*, pp. 76, 77.
*Cross Curricular Literacy for Improving Secondary Students' Reading and Writing Skills,* pp.70, 71.
*Info Tasks for Successful Learning* pp.18, organizer pp. 83.

* periodical refers to newspapers, magazines and journals

**Further Support**
- Provide multiple opportunities to consolidate knowledge, practise and understand concepts, key ideas.

**R**

## Reading Different Text Forms: Reading Informational Texts
### Distinguishing Fact and Opinion

**Notes**

| What teachers do | What students do |
|---|---|
| **Before**<br>• Determine curricular issue.<br>• Select articles to be analyzed by the students.<br>• Review the terms fact and opinion.<br>• Brainstorm prior knowledge on topic/issue.<br>• Project the article and highlight text (two colours) showing fact and opinion.<br>• Model the strategy using one article.<br>• Think aloud e.g., "This is a fact because…", "I think this is an opinion because…"<br>• Review the highlighted text and have students discuss the factors that distinguish fact and opinion. Build a chart of characteristics and clue words. See the *Tips for Identifying Facts and Opinions* section in Teacher Resource, *Teaching Students to Distinguish Fact and Opinion.* | • Contribute to understanding of fact and opinion.<br>• Contribute to discussion on topic or issue.<br><br>• Contribute to building a chart of the characteristics and clue words for fact and opinion. |
| **During**<br>• Either as individual assignments or as pair/small group work assign an article(s).<br>• Review prior brainstorming on topic/issue.<br>• Instruct students to search for what appears to be factual.<br>• Skim and scan for names, dates, location, quantities. See Student Resource, *Skimming and Scanning to Preview Text*.<br>• Read article and highlight just the facts.<br>• Review words and phrases that often introduce opinions, then read the article again to identify opinion(s).<br>• Have pairs/groups discuss examples from the article that they think are opinions.<br>• Highlight the opinion(s). | • Skim and scan text for facts.<br><br><br>• Highlight text for facts.<br>• Search for clue words for opinions.<br>• Collaborate with partner to decide opinions.<br><br>• Highlight text for opinions. |
| **After**<br>• Have the class or small groups share to confirm facts and opinions.<br>• Ask students to find another article on the topic or issue using the online periodical database.<br>• Search using keywords, and subject terms.<br>• Go through a similar procedure to reinforce the strategy and provide opportunities to practise.<br>• Record questions or reactions to the topic that students still have.<br><br>• As an extension, compare the two articles. | • Participate in class discussion.<br><br>• Find online periodical article on topic.<br><br>• Analyze article for fact and opinion.<br>• Develop an effective search strategy using key words.<br>• Add personal questions and reflections.<br><br>• Compare the two articles. |

# Teaching Students to Distinguish Fact and Opinion

## Why is this skill important?

- Students in grades 7, 8 and 9 need to be able to distinguish fact from opinion in order to make sense of information text in all curriculum areas. This ability is a prerequisite for the development and application of thinking skills such as:
  - identifying main ideas.
  - making inferences.
  - questioning and evaluating ideas.
  - evaluating conflicting points of view.
  - analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information.
  - making judgments and drawing conclusions based on evidence.
  - developing a point of view based on the examination of evidence.

- Students need to distinguish fact and opinion as they use increasingly complex material from magazines, newspapers and websites that often reflect personal and/or biased points of view.

- Many students become confused when an issue is presented from different points of view, each supported by seemingly factual evidence. Some students may need further practice distinguishing fact and opinion.

- Articulating personal opinion supported by facts gleaned from a variety of information sources is the foundation for writing a supported opinion piece.

## Tips to Help Students Distinguish Facts and Opinions

### Facts
- events that actually occurred
- information that is exact and provable
- information that is specific and accurate
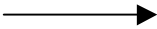- dates, names, quantities

### Opinions
- views, thoughts, feelings and judgments
- conclusions that cannot be proved
- often begin with words and phrases such as *virtually, clearly, no doubt, most, almost none, it is apparent*, etc.
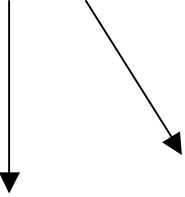
### Reminder for Students
- Watch out for opinions presented as fact.
- Be aware of the author's intent and/or bias.

# Skimming and Scanning to Preview Text

| *Skimming* | |
|---|---|
| What is it? | When you SKIM, you read quickly to get the main idea of a paragraph, page, chapter, or article, and a few (but not all) of the details. |
| Why do I skim? | Skimming allows you to read quickly to get a general sense of a text so that you can decide whether it has useful information for you. You may also skim to get a key idea. After skimming a piece, you might decide that you want or need to read it in greater depth. |
| How do I skim?<br><br>⟶<br><br>Read in this direction. | 1. Read the first few paragraphs, two or three middle paragraphs, and the final two or three paragraphs of a piece, trying to get a basic understanding of the information.<br>2. Some people prefer to skim by reading the first and last sentence of each paragraph, that is, the topic sentences and concluding sentences.<br>3. If there are pictures, diagrams, or charts, a quick glance at them and their captions may help you to understand the main idea or point of view in the text.<br>4. Remember: You do **not** have to read every word when you skim.<br>5. Generally, move your eyes horizontally (and quickly) when you skim. |

| *Scanning* | |
|---|---|
| What is it? | When you SCAN, you move your eyes quickly down a page or list to find one specific detail. |
| Why do I scan? | Scanning allows you to locate quickly a single fact, date, name, or word in a text without trying to read or understand the rest of the piece. You may need that fact or word later to respond to a question or to add a specific detail to something you are writing. |
| How do I scan?<br><br>Read in these directions. | 1. Knowing your text well is important. Make a prediction about where in a chapter you might find the word, name, fact, term, or date.<br>2. Note how the information is arranged on a page. Will headings, diagrams, or boxed or highlighted items guide you? Is information arranged alphabetically or numerically as it might be in a telephone book or glossary?<br>3. Move your eyes vertically or diagonally down the page, letting them dart quickly from side to side and keeping in mind the exact type of information that you want. Look for other closely associated words that might steer you toward the detail for which you are looking.<br>4. Aim for 100% accuracy! |

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# Small-group Discussions: Group Roles

### Information Circles: Interpreting Nonfiction Text

Students are divided into groups of a certain size - for example, five members. Each student is assigned a specific role and responsibility to carry out during the small-group discussion.

## Purpose
- Encourage active participation by all group members.
- Foster awareness of the various tasks necessary in small-group discussion.
- Make students comfortable in a variety of roles in a discussion group.

## Payoff
Students will:
- all speak in small groups.
- have specific roles to fulfill, clearly defining their role in the small group.
- receive positive feedback that is built into the process.
- participate actively in their learning.

## Tips and Resources
- Information Circles work on the same principle as *Reading Circles*\*; however, the students are working with non-fiction materials rather than with fiction.
- When information circles are first introduced, model each role before group work commences.
- This strategy can be applied to any content area when students are required to read and interpret information. Because of the collaborative nature of the strategy, it is best applied when exploring a problem, question or a controversial issue.
- Consult your school library for suitable resources to support your curriculum topic.
- Rarely will you find enough non-fiction books on a single topic for the entire class.  Consider:
    - rotating groups of students through centres using non-fiction books and substitute alternate types of resources on the topic.
    - using video, print or on-line encyclopedia article(s), web site(s), and magazine or newspaper article(s).
- This differentiated teaching and learning strategy:
    - helps students develop strategies for finding and interpreting relevant data from informational texts.
    - honours multiple intelligences.
    - engages students who prefer to read non-fiction.
    - supports reading development through purposeful talk and active listening for special needs students.

 *Info Tasks for Successful Learning* pp.62, 109-113.
*\*Small Group Discussions: Reading Circles* www.elan.on.ca.

## Further Support
- Build subject specific vocabulary for ESL students.
- Provide multiple opportunities to consolidate knowledge, to practise and to understand concepts and key ideas.
- Teacher may join small group(s) to model and facilitate.

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## Small-group Discussions: Group Roles

### Information Circles: Interpreting Nonfiction Text

| What teachers do | What students do |
|---|---|
| **Before** | |
| • Select curricular issue/problem and develop engaging question(s) to guide the student inquiry. Post and discuss some guiding question(s). <br> • Decide on the number of students in each group and the roles and descriptions. <br> • Prepare role cards. See Student Resource, *Sample Role Cards for Information Circles*. <br> • Select a variety of texts at appropriate reading levels to have enough resources for every class member e.g., information books, videos, web site(s), magazine or newspaper articles, print or on-line encyclopedia articles, selections from the textbook. <br> • Schedule times and locations for work. <br> • Read aloud the picture book, stopping to model each role as appropriate points in the text. <br> • Let students clarify roles. | • Understand the guiding question(s). <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> • Understand the responsibilities of each role and the group task. <br> • Participate in class responses to each role. |
| **During** | |
| • Divide the class into groups and assign types of text and roles for the first day. <br> • Remind students to use the guiding question(s) to focus the discussion. <br> • Review timing and develop assessment criteria. Circulate, ensuring that all students are on task. <br> • Each day, interact with and provide support to one (or more) group(s). <br> • Allow approximately two-thirds of class time for reading and completing role tasks and one-third for a sharing circle. <br> • Instruct students to individually complete their log. See Student Resource, *Learning Logs for Information Circles.* | • Stay on task by revisiting role cards and the guiding question(s), and when needed, the modeled responses. <br> • Complete the role task. <br> • Share findings and participate in their group circle discussions. <br><br> • Listen attentively. <br> • Support and encourage other group members. <br> • Adhere to time limits. <br> • Complete learning log after each working session. |
| **After** | |
| • Repeat the activity until all students have experienced each centre and all the roles. <br> • Give students time to review their role work sheets and to complete Student Resource, *Learning Log for Information Circles.* <br> • As a class, discuss common findings and record on chart paper. <br> • Have students complete Student Resource, *Small-group Discussion Reflection Sheet.* | • Review all role work sheets. <br> • Complete final summary on Student Resource, *Learning Log for Information Circles.* <br><br> • Participate in class discussion. <br><br> • Complete Student Resource, *Small-group Discussion Reflection Sheet.* |

**Notes**

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## Sample Role Cards for Information Circles

| The Wordsmith | The Data Digger |
|---|---|
| • Today you are the Wordsmith. Your job is to read and view your information text and keep track of new and interesting words/phrases that you discover.<br>• Select six interesting words/phrases.<br>• Use a dictionary to record the meanings and be prepared to share your findings in discussion/information circle. | • Today as the Data Digger you are trying to uncover information to help your group find the answer to our class question.<br>• Record your discoveries in point form on index cards or sticky notes.<br>• Review your data and select the most relevant to share in discussion/information circle. |
| **The Questioner** | **The Reflector** |
| • As the Questioner you will have the opportunity to probe the information you read and view with a critical eye.<br>• Record questions you have as you read the text.<br>• Review your questions; select your best six and share at discussion circle.<br>**Note**: Vary your questions, using the question starters - who, what, when, where, why and how. | • Today you will be asked to make personal connections to the information you are reading and viewing.<br>• Consider:<br>   - *Is this important? Why?*<br>   - *Do you agree or disagree? Why?*<br>   - *What is your opinion?*<br>• Record your thoughts and share them at the discussion circle. |
| **The Illustrator** | **The Moderator** |
| • After completing your reading/viewing, your task today is to think of a way to record the key ideas you discovered in a visual format.  You are the Illustrator!<br>• Try a chart, graph, sketch, web, cartoon, diagram or a combination of visual formats.<br>• Prepare to present your visual record to the group. | • As Moderator, you have read/viewed your information text. Your task today is to keep the conversations flowing in your group.<br>• Encourage others to comment and ask questions.<br>• If your group is straying off topic remind them of the inquiry question(s).<br>• Remind the group to fill out their learning logs. |

Adapted from *InfoTasks for Successful Learning. Pembroke Publishers, 2001*

# Learning Logs for Information Circles

| Date | Role |
|---|---|
| Text used | |
| Reflections and questions | |

| Date | Role |
|---|---|
| Text used | |
| Reflections and questions | |

| Date | Role |
|---|---|
| Text used | |
| Reflections and questions | |

| Date | Role |
|---|---|
| Text used | |
| Reflections and questions | |

| Date |
|---|
| Summary Ideas |

# Small-group Discussion Reflection Sheet

Name:_____     Role:_____

Topic:_____

A.  Comment on **your group's ability** to work together in a positive manner.  Consider cooperation, listening, and organization.

What are your group's strengths?

What are your group's areas for improvement?

B.  Comment on **your own ability** to work in a positive manner.  Consider cooperation, listening and organization.

What are your strengths?

What are your areas for improvement?

Comment on your success in fulfilling the role you were assigned.

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## Small-group Discussions: Face-to-Face and Virtual

### Info Talk Discussion Groups and Reading Clubs

Talk plays an essential part in building reading and comprehension skills. Info Talk Discussion Groups or Reading Clubs are organized sessions structured to give students time to read and discuss material that they are highly interested in. Research supports giving adolescent students the freedom to self-select and to choose reading material. The intent of this strategy is to foster a network of readers and to develop a lifelong love of reading. The groups can meet face to face during or after school hours, or the discussion can be set up virtually.

**Purpose**
- Motivate students to expand their reading experiences.
- Engage in purposeful talk.
- Discuss and reflect on new ideas and information.
- Practise reading skills in meaningful ways.

**Payoff**
Students will:
- explore a topic for deeper understanding .
- share learning, ideas and reactions with their peers in a more social setting.
- sharpen skills in small-group discussion, especially in listening and persuading.
- focus on the "big ideas".
- practise summarizing ideas.

**Tips and Resources**
- Info Talk groups or clubs are socially constructed activities that allow for talk and relationship building, important components of positive reading experiences. It is important to set a relaxed and non- threatening atmosphere.
- Info Talk groups provide an opportunity for classroom curricular extensions to support specialized student interest on a topic or issue e.g., spread of West Nile virus, terrorism alerts, theft of a famous painting.
- Teachers can introduce and use a variety of material and formats (articles, websites, videos, artifacts and books) to extend experiences with their specific curricular topics during Info Talk sessions. Examples are:
  - Geography - immigration experiences, Travelogue
  - Science - Science Fiction books, journal articles
  - History -  Historical Fiction novels, primary sources
  - Family Studies - family dynamics, parenting
  - Physical Education and Health - disabilities, substance abuse
  - Choices Into Action - realistic fiction - making lifestyle choices
  - English - genres, media studies
  - Dramatic Arts - scenarios, review columns
  - all subjects: biographies, careers
- Info Talk discussion groups support school-wide literacy initiatives. See Teacher Resource, *Join the Club*.
- There are many online virtual forums and online book clubs. See Teacher Resource *Join the Club*.
  - Face-to-Face and Virtual Book Clubs & Reading Groups http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic112.htm

**Further Support**
- Encourage students to use graphic organizers to prepare their responses for face to face/virtual discussion.
- The school library provides access to a wide range of supplementary reading materials. Teachers and teacher-librarians could collaborate in the selection of material, and in the structure of the Info Talk groups.

## Small-group Discussions: Face-to-Face and Virtual

### Info Talk Discussion Groups and Reading Clubs

| What teachers do | What students do |
|---|---|
| **Before** <br> • Set up the Info Talk group. See Teacher Resource, *Join the Club.* <br> • Survey students or select an issue for discussion. <br> • Find a suitable resource for reading e.g., a newspaper or magazine article, website, artifact, a passage from a text, or a book. <br> • Prepare and distribute copies if meeting face-to-face or post to students if virtual. <br> • Prepare discussion prompts or questions to initiate talk. See Teacher Resource, *Generic Questions for Read Aloud.* | • Suggest topics and issues or specific text of special interest for discussion focus. <br> • Read the assigned text. <br><br><br> • Prepare to talk about the text. |
| **During** <br> • Welcome the group to Info Talk. Ensure that everyone understands how the discussion will be conducted. <br> • Moderate the first few sessions and then appoint a moderator if appropriate. <br> • Review the language of group work for face-to-face and netiquette for virtual discussion. See Teacher Resource, *Join the Club*. <br>    - listening without interrupting <br>    - polite negotiating (e.g., Do you think...? Would you agree that...? I don't agree that…? I don't agree with that because…) <br>    - prompts for paraphrasing (e.g., So you were saying… Am I understanding you to say… ) <br> • Introduce discussion prompts or questions and begin dialogue. <br> • Encourage further questions. | • Listen without interrupting. <br><br><br> • Use appropriate language for negotiations. <br> • Paraphrase and respond. <br> • Demonstrate respect of others' opinions. <br><br><br> • Actively join in the discussion, staying on topic. <br> • Ask questions to clarify understanding. |
| **After** <br> • Call upon each group to report their key ideas and discussions. <br> • Document the key ideas of the discussion in a list, chart or web and post for everyone. <br> • Invite ideas for the next Info Talk session or series of sessions. | • Report key ideas. <br><br> • Contribute to creating a summary document. <br> • Suggest topics of special interest. |

# Generic Questions for Read Aloud

**Before**
Based on the title, what do you think this article/text is about?
What springs to mind when you hear the title?
What do you already know about this topic/event/person?
What do you hope to find out about this topic?

**During**
What do you think _____ means in this article/text?  Why?
What is the author's purpose in writing this article/text?
With what do you think the rest of the article will deal?
Does the author seem unbiased in his/her views on the topic?  Why do you think as you do?
What is the audience for this article/text?  Why do you think so?
Is the style formal or informal?  What evidence do you have?
How is _____ like/different _____?
What are the strengths and weaknesses of _____?
Why has the author used statistics in this article? How do these statistics affect your reaction to the text?
Why has the author used quotations? How does the use of quotations affect your reaction to the text?
Why has the author used expert opinion? How does the use of expert opinion affect your reaction?
Why has the author used examples in this article/text?
What are the causes/effects of _____?
What are the potential positive/negative impacts of _____?
What are the possible ripple effects?
Whose views are presented? What are they?
Why does _____ believe _____?
Are there points of view missing? Whose?
How do you feel about the points of view the author opted to use?
Are we getting fact or opinion?
Can you identify any patterns or trends?
How does _____ relate to _____?
What questions came to mind as you listened?

**After**
What in the article/text do you find most interesting?
What in the article/text do you find confusing?
What is the main idea in this portion of the article/text?
What examples and supporting details has the author provided?
How has the author engaged or not engaged your interest?
What advice would you give the author at this point?
Why do you agree or disagree with what the author has written?
What examples from your experience of life support the author's view?
What examples from your experience of life oppose the author's view?
How has the author changed your way of thinking about this topic?
What does the author mean by_____?
What are the implications of _____?
Who or what will _____ influence?
Does _____ really matter? Why?
How can we use this information?
What is the importance of _____?
The most important thing about this article is_____
The main message is_____
What do you think about_____?
Make a prediction about_____
Suppose _____?
How does this article affect your views on the topic?
In what way/s does this information impact on you? Why
If you could interview/email the author what would you say?
If you had the opportunity to challenge or react to the article what would you say?
If you wrote a letter to the editor regarding this article what would your main points be?
If you were asked to critique this article what would you say?

# Join the Club

## Starting Info Talk Discussion Groups: Book Clubs, Face-to-Face

Info Talk Discussion Groups are a great way to get your students involved with reading and sharing of ideas. Interacting with other readers enhances a student's understanding of a text. An Info Talk Discussion Group facilitates meaningful conversations about an issue, topic, and text, in a non-threatening, teacher-supported context. It is important to establish an inviting environment to encourage student exchange of ideas and opinions.

**Starting a Face-to-Face Info Talk:**
- Share with students the purpose of organizing Info Talk session and invite interested students to join.
- Set criteria/rules and parameters:
    - Participants read material prior to meeting.
    - Meeting times and dates are established.
    - Material for discussion is pre-selected by students in turn or by the instructor based on students' interest.
    - Length of Info Talk sessions depends on specific topics/issues e.g. stem cell research could be a review of one article or it could continue all term reviewing diverse materials.
    - Membership should be based on need - small groups of 8-10, an entire class or several classes if the forum is a virtual discussion group.
    - Sessions can be scheduled outside of classes or conducted as part of class time by reserving a chunk of time every week for Info Talk.
- Form a focused club based on interest and objective:
    - All students read, share and discuss the same book/material e.g., fantasy - *Lord of the Rings,* cloning article.
    - All students read same format or genre e.g., graphic novels, science fiction.
    - Students read different articles/text on the same topic and discuss and share information presented, point of view, bias, opinions, debate e.g., UN role in Sudan, homelessness in cities, and body image in media.
    - Students read, view or listen to explore a period in music, art or history to gain a deeper understanding.
- Set up Info Talk format:
    - Designate a moderator.
    - Design discussion starter questions.
    - Organize students to work in pairs, small groups and/or large groups.

**Choosing Discussion Material**
- Present students with multiple titles on theme/topic and select one for focus e.g. the growing obesity in children
- Select material from a variety of reading materials and formats:
    - Source articles, non-fiction books, graphic novels, biographies.
    - Analyze media such as video, specialized web sites - e.g. CBC Archives - moments in Canadian history.
    - Discuss and compare a feature film and book e.g. Harry Potter.
    - Conduct live or virtual interviews e.g. letters, email, video and/or teleconference.
- Participate in:
    - a broad based provincial Reader's Choice program: e.g., Red Maple (gr.7, 8), White Pine (gr. 9, 10) <http://www.accessola.com> (Check the site for titles, and teacher ideas and strategies to use with the books)

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## Starting Info Talk Discussion Groups: Book Clubs, Face-to-Face *… continued*

**Choosing Discussion Material** … continued
• Participate in:
  - local programs such as Battle of the Books <http://www.battleofthebooks.org/what.html> <http://www.bpl.on.ca/kids/battle.htm> (regional competitions - students represent school and answer questions on books read)

**Strategies for Extending Info Talk Discussion Groups and Reading Clubs:**
• mock interview of expert, author, character of book
• drama extensions e.g., role play, interview, hot seating
• compare print and non print e.g., book and video; issue and newscast
• create web or mind maps on issues, problems
• debate an issue
• Small-group Discussion *Think Pair Share* pp. 152 – 153.
• Small-group Discussion: *Four Corners* pp. 182, 183.
• Small-group Discussion: *Place Mat* pp. 162 –164.
• Small-group Discussion: *Triangle Debate* pp. 187-192.

## **Starting Info Talk Discussion Groups: Virtual Forms**

Students and teachers read the same research article, access the same resources, and participate in the same discussions, but not in the same space or at the same time. Participation is accomplished through the posting of discussion. Students will have the opportunity to build an online learning community. This approach accommodates unique needs, styles, paces and environments and is a good introduction to virtual/distance type learning. Virtual participation may encourage students who would be uncomfortable in a face-to-face setting. Schools with tight schedules may find this forum advantageous.

### **Considerations:**
• Will your group join an existing online discussion group (book club) or forum or will you start your own?
• Ensure access to appropriate technologies if students do not have access outside of the school facility.
• Set rules, criteria/parameters for online group e.g. reading material by deadline.
• Review netiquette rules.
  - E-mails are focused and on topic.
  - Students should take some time to phrase answers before posting, e.g., students could develop responses on a word processing program, editing for grammar, spelling and content before sending/posting message.

### **Joining an Existing Online Discussion Group/Reading Club:**
• A small group of interested students or a whole class can participate. (If whole class is participating, it might be best for them to work in groups, or to combine groups of answers into a single e-mail.)
• Need access to e-mail: read and send email.

#### **Participation:**
• Students read the posted material/book and talk about it with their friends.
• Check the e-mail on the advertised date for the first message.
• Read question or discussion prompts and prepare a response.
• E-mail response to list.
• Check e-mail daily (several times a week) and read other responses.
• Respond to other posted responses via the list of participants.

#### **Some Current Online Clubs/Forums/Chats to Consider:**
• Global Youth Forums
  <http://rite.ed.qut.edu.au/ozteachernet/index.php?module=ContentExpress&func=display&ceid=21&bid=55&btitle=Past%20Projects&meid=79 > (discussion and debate on a particular topic e.g. cloning conducted via
  e-mail and online forums; set time period for issue discussion/debate)
• Taking it Global http://www.takingitglobal.org/doflash.html?width=800 (voice of youth -global online youth network/community - monthly issues/themes (refugees), information, discussion boards, web logs, ezines
  200 countries-started by Ontario students - English/French/Spanish)
• Book Rap <http://rite.ed.qut.edu.au/old_oz-teachernet/projects/book-rap/> (books - uses Bloom's Taxonomy framework for questions)
• Book BackChat < http://english.unitecnology.ac.nz/bookchat/about.html> (books)
• Teen reads <http://www.teenreads.com/> (books)

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## Starting Info Talk Discussion Groups: Virtual Forums*…continued*

**Starting Your Own Online Info Talk Forum:**
• Determine online access and online site for your group, such as your school web page, or a conference on your school internal communications network e.g., First Class, bulletin board, chat room or e-mail.
• Decide how and when you will post material for online discussion.
• Set timelines for responses.
• Plan how you will encourage participation, and monitor discussion.

**Running Your Virtual Info Talk Group**
• Create a suitable project.
• Have students:
  - check e-mail/conference at least every few days.
  - compose and share/post ideas.
  - respond to questions and discussion prompts as quickly as possible.
• Supervise/monitor and participate in online dialogue with your students.