



## **Information Literacy Activities**

All the following activities are used by teachers in primary classrooms and libraries. You can adapt them to suit your own pupils and your own resources. **Each of the activities can be built into any topic or project that you think is a good vehicle to development information literacy.** Although the activities have been grouped under particular years you don't have to use them in this way. You may want to modify an activity to use it with a different age group.

These activities will start you on the road to developing information literacy and using the library with your pupils. If you would like to build on this work there are more activities and pupil worksheets in the primary school information skills toolkit at <http://www.sla.org.uk/sla-guidelines.php> (published by the School Library Association).

### **Four Activities for Years 1 and 2**

In these early years many teachers concentrate on introducing children to organisation in the library, different types of resources, and thinking about information for 'finding out'. Here are four suggestions:

## **Activity 1: An introduction to the idea of organising books in the library**

Even before introducing her pupils to the library an infant teacher has roughly sorted the books in her classroom and tagged each section in a different colour. After use the children are encouraged to return the books to the correct section, using colour as the guide. The aim is to convey to the children that the books have a particular place – an early lesson in library use.

When children are taken to the library they look for the sections that correspond to the colours used in the classroom and draw pictures showing where the different coloured sections are.

## **Activity 2: Handling books**

Children are put into groups and given books to look at with the book titles masked. They are told to look at the illustrations on the front and back covers. The children are then asked to predict what the books are likely to be about. The teacher then goes round and tells the children the title of the books. They are told that they can change their prediction of what the book is about if they want to. Afterwards the teacher talks to the class about 'clues' to what a book is about. She focuses on differences between books telling stories and books giving information.

A range of worn and damaged books are put out in the library - e.g. water damage, food spills, tears, rips and bites. (Specimens kept after the school library has been weeded can be supplemented with books withdrawn from the local public library). Groups of children are given a

couple books to look at. They are asked to discuss how the books might have got damaged and worn. The class then makes a list of 'what not to do with books'. The children draw pictures to illustrate their rules.

### **Activity 3: Fiction and non-fiction**

The children are already familiar with the terms fiction and non-fiction. They are doing a new topic and the teacher takes them to the library. She brings with her some relevant books from her classroom and some that she borrowed from the Schools Library Service. She has already put the relevant books from the library on a table. She puts all the books into three piles, with a group of children around each pile. They have to sort the books into fiction and non-fiction. When the children have finished, the groups move round and the children check each others' piles of books. They take out any books that they think are in the wrong pile. The teacher asks the children to explain why they have taken some of the books out.

(This can also be done with the teacher making piles of fiction and non-fiction in advance, some of which are deliberately in the wrong place. The children have to identify the wrong ones in the piles and explain why they are in the wrong pile.)

### **Activity 4: Relevant information?**

Piles of resources are placed around the library - books, pictures, charts, CDs etc. Boxes labelled with different topics are put at the front of the library. Children are sent in small groups to select materials from the piles and put them in the correct topic boxes. The teacher chooses a

number of resources from each box and asks the relevant group to explain why they have put them in that box - what clues have they used?

## **Four activities for Years 3 and 4**

### **Activity 1: Finding your way around a non-fiction book**

Give each pupil a book (You can either use a class set of books or give different ones to each member of the class). Ask them to imagine that they only have a very short time to find out what the book is about. Tell them they have three minutes to discover what it contains.

- At the end of the 3 minutes, ask them to put the book away and write down all they can about it. (Give the class about five minutes).
- Then ask each child to compare results with a neighbour. Pupils should discuss what they have found out and how they discovered it.
- Ask the children to comment on how easy or difficult they found the task. Then ask them to describe the ways that they found the information they did. (A list of ways can be built up on a board.)

Summarise the ideas they produced about how to find out quickly what the book contains.

### **Activity 6: Which sources for which questions?**

The teacher collects a wide range of resources on a topic (e.g. books, posters, Internet printouts, leaflets, magazine articles). She draws a line

along the floor of the library (or in the classroom). She writes 'very useful' at one end and 'not relevant' at the other end. She reads out a question on the topic and asks small groups of children to place the resources along the line, choosing the best place for each resource in relation to the question.

When all the resources have been put somewhere on the line, the teacher asks the children how they decided where the resources went. She asks questions about reading difficulty, amount of information, age of the resource as well as asking about content. She then reads out another question on the same topic and asks the children to move any resources that are now in the wrong place. She asks them to explain why they have made the changes, emphasising that different resources are useful for different purposes.

### **Activity 7: Boolean searching on-line**

One of the problems that children have is in narrowing and widening searches to find appropriate information to answer a question. There is a new search engine that is fun to use and makes a point.

<http://www.boolify.org/>

Use this search engine when a group of children are trying to find information. They can type in their keywords and then add or exclude words from their search. The engine provides a visual picture of the progress of their search and immediately shows how the number of hits is increasing or decreasing. The children should print out a copy of the progress of their search for discussion about searching on-line.

## **Activity 8: making sense of information**

When there is a lot of information available, especially in electronic form, it is tempting for children to just print it out or cut and paste on-line. Teachers have different ways to encourage children to work with information so that they can make sense of it:

- Using graphic organisers such as flowcharts, timelines, cause and effect boxes (visit <http://www.graphic.org/goindex.html> to see many different ones). Children are asked to use an organiser to present the information they have found in a different way.
- Limiting children to small cards on which to record important words or ideas
- Using writing frames which provide scaffolding for children to record what they have learned:  
<http://www.warwick.ac.uk/staff/D.J.Wray/Ideas/frames.html>

### **Three activities for Years 5 and 6**

#### **Activity 9: Revisiting the library**

The teacher prepares a set of questions on the topic that the children are doing. She then put the children into pairs. One child in each pair is the searcher and has the list of questions to be answered. The other child is the observer

- Each observer has a sheet of paper headed 'What are they doing to answer the questions?' and is told to write down what their partner does.
- The teacher gives the observers some ideas about what to note (e.g. where their partner goes first in the library; what books/websites they look at; how long they spend looking at different resources.)
- The children are given 30 minutes to answer the questions.
- At the end of the time the children are called back together and put into groups to compare what the searchers have done to answer the questions. Each group reports back on what they have done in the same ways and what has been different.
- The teacher comments on what is reported and makes some general points about finding information. She then asks the children which questions were most difficult to answer and why.

(You may want to swap the observers and searchers around after 15 minutes to give each child the opportunity to take on both roles.)

### **Activity 10: Comparing resources**

This activity is good for showing children that one source of information may not answer all their questions and that information on the Internet may not be trustworthy.

- Choose a range of resources on a topic. They should include some websites (including *wikipedia*) and some reference and other non-fiction books. You need enough resources for each group of three children to have a different resource to look at.

- Prepare a set of questions on the topic. Give each group of children the same set of questions. Assign each group to ONE of the resources and tell the children that they have to answer as many of the questions as possible from that single resource. Set a time limit.
- Pin a table up on the wall or lay it on the floor; it needs to be big enough to write on:

	<b>Resource A</b>	<b>Resource B</b>	<b>Resource C</b>	<b>Resource D</b>	<b>Resource E</b>
<b>What was the name of the.....</b>					
<b>Why did.....</b>					
<b>Who was the first.....</b>					
<b>What was the main reason for.....</b>					
<b>How many...</b>					

Tell the children to write the answers they have found in the right box as they go along. The matrix will gradually fill up.

When the time is up, discuss what is on the table: are there different answers to some questions? Which do you think are correct? Did all resources have answers to all questions? How quickly could answers be found in different resources?

As a variation on this activity you can split the class in half. Tell one half to answer the questions using the Internet and the other half to use printed material. The children can choose the specific resources

themselves. You can compare speed, accuracy and completeness of information from the different sources.

### **Activity 11: Asking good questions**

The quality of the work that children do is closely related to the quality of the questions they ask. It is important to spend time with children helping them to formulate and refine their questions. These activities are done before the children begin to think about how to collect information. Teachers use different strategies to encourage good questions:

- After the children have chosen/been given a subject they have to devise a question in each of the categories What? Why? Where? When? How?
- Children work in groups of three to devise questions to ask an expert on their subject. They are told to record what questions they would ask if they only had 10 minutes with the expert and what would they ask if they had 45-60 minutes.
- In groups, children brainstorm all the questions that they would like answers to. They record their questions on a large sheet of paper. When they have finished these sheets are displayed around the classroom. The children go round to look at the questions that other groups have written. They can write comments and questions. Each group then returns to its own table and looks at the comments and discusses changes to their own questions.