BRiGHTON Education
Creating Opportunities

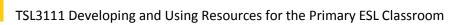Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail

TSL3111 Developing and Using Resources for the Primary ESL Classroom

Topic 5: Technical Skills and Knowledge for Producing Materials

Ruth Wickham, Brighton Education Training Fellow, IPGKDRI

Student's Notes

Contents

Topic 5: Technical skills and knowledge for producing materials

Most of the time the exact materials for the exact lessons the teacher wants to present are not commercially available – or if they are, they are way too pricey for a humble teacher's budget. Part of the fun of teaching is producing customised materials in order to present lively engaging lessons for our young students.
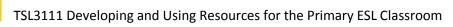
eg. boards, charts, puppets, 'Big' books, masks, slides, audio

Selection of raw materials

The bookshop and stationery shop is a favourite haunt of many a primary school teacher who loves to create beautiful display charts and cards for practice. Many teachers save recyclable cardboard boxes, packets, and pictures or pretty paper whenever they find them.

Students brainstorm in their discussion groups where they could find materials for the following classroom activities – some suggestions are offered here:

Posters/Displays: ....
....

Making Puppets: ....
....
....

Creating storybooks: ....
....
....

Creating Big Books..
....
....

Drama: ....
....

Craft materials: ....
....

Play Dough...
....

Realia...
....

Worksheets: ....
....

NOTE: teachers need to be proficient in the use of WORD in order to create quality worksheets. Do you know how to create worksheets? Fill in the table, add any extras you think of at the bottom.

Can you:

Skill	I can do this	I'm not sure how to	I don't think I need to
Insert pictures			
Edit pictures			
Insert a screen shot			
Insert clip art			
Insert Word Art			
Insert a text box			
Insert shapes			
Insert a table			
Edit a table			
Add borders			
Change font/size			
Add lines for writing			

Discuss with your group. Help each other with skills anyone may not yet have.

Assembling of raw materials

So you have acquired / purchased all sorts of stationary materials and now you are ready to create teaching aids.

*Here are some ideas about creating a **Teaching Pack** (notes from the Songs and Poetry unit).*

Creating a Teaching Pack

All teacher trainees are asked to prepare a teaching kit before heading out on Practicum. Some amazing kits have been created, but here are a few of the fundamental problems that have been observed in some of them:

K.I.S.S

Everyone knows that these letters stand for "Keep It Simple Stupid" – right? 'Complicated' and 'Great' are not the same thing! That doesn't mean it can't be big, and colourful, and interesting … just avoid complicated.

Check Everything

A great many of the kits have basic grammar and spelling errors in the songs and poems. How can people who are going to be teachers of English make these basic mistakes? One of the easiest ways to check something is to type it into WORD, especially if it is an original work. Make sure that the language setting on the tool bar at the bottom is set to 'English', whether UK, USA or Australia – but NOT 'English (Malaysia)'! Then observe the red, green and blue underlines. They are not *always* correct, but more often than many of us!

Use Lower Case

When we learn to read, we use the overall shape of each word as a clue. Only words written in lower case have this shape. Capital letters just look like a rectangle – 'BLOCK CAPITALS'. So anything that you want the children to practice reading should be in lower case – except the capital letter at the beginning when it is appropriate.

Big Enough

Sometimes when you are sitting at your desk and you create a picture it seems really big on A4 paper. However, if you put that same picture at the front of the classroom it looks pitifully small from the back. Possibly the best way for children in a classroom to view a picture is with an LCD projector because it is not only large but also well-lit. Failing that (as few Primary School classrooms come equipped with LCD projectors!) the pictures need to be really (really) big. If A4 is as big as possible, then maybe the children need to be brought down to the front of the class (bring their chairs, or sit on a mat) for the song/poem/story. (A picture which is smaller than A4 should not even be considered.)

Durable or Disposable

If you put a lot of work into your teaching materials, you don't want them to be destroyed by many small grubby hands, and you will probably be reluctant to hand them over to the children – each and every one of whom wants to have 'a go'. You have two choices: Either create your teaching aids durable enough to withstand many, many uses – for instance, laminate everything, or make everything cheap and disposable. Have plenty of copies so everyone can have one.

No child left out

If there is an activity, every child wants a turn. Make sure you have sufficient copies / items / materials so that every child has an opportunity to participate. This is something to consider when planning your lesson – if it is going to be too difficult to supply enough for everyone, choose a different activity, or work out how to do it in pairs / groups and share.

Hit the ground with your feet running

At the start of your lesson, you need to "hit the ground with your feet running". (This is an expression that refers to some animals that are literally born ready to run away from danger.) You need to be ready to start your lesson straight away, and the class should never have to sit and wait while you prepare things – it is not only impolite on your part, but you will straightaway start losing control of the class.

So if there is something that you have to do such as putting up materials or laying things out, give the children something to be busy with while you do it. Plan ahead, or else plan how to get the children to do it with you or for you.

Don't waste your time on the packaging

Some trainee teachers produce beautiful Teaching Kits - lovely wrapping paper, a clever container or box - but there is very little of value inside. There is no harm in having a beautifully packaged kit, but only if we still have time to put the good stuff inside it. Work on the insides first, and wrap it up nicely if you still have time.

Keep Focussed on the Children

Some kits are prepared simply to impress the lecturer who will be marking it. Stay focussed on the children and the lessons you are planning.

Kids need to DO something

Make sure there are activities for the children to do, and not just listening to you. As well as singing, moving, and even playing something as a percussion instrument, it's good to let them create something physical such as drawing, colouring, origami, puppet-making, play-dough ... if possible steer away from reading and writing exercises.

Allow for low tech

Here at the IPG we get used to having lots of technology available to us, but out in the schools these things are not always readily available. If you plan to use technology, make sure you have a low-tech option available too.

Use your body and your voice

In Speaking and Listening and Language Arts lessons, you want the children to learn the songs / poems / stories and sing or say them too. You are the model; you need to use your voice and your body. It's ok to use video and audio assistance – some of the time – but don't leave it at that. Transmit your enthusiasm to the children by putting your voice and your body on the line. If you feel you are doing a bad job, once one or more of the children get the hang of it, they can stand alongside you and hep or even take the lead for you.

Avoid using reading and writing

For Speaking and Listening lessons, and most Language Arts lessons, the children do not need to be able to read the words of a song/poem/story in order to learn from it. In fact, educationally it is better to start by just listening without the 'help' of written words, just a picture or some other visual aid.

Considering all that you have learnt so far, you would soon realise that as a classroom teacher you need to be able to create games that are best suited to the needs of your class. There are many types and variations of games.

Read the notes below, and then answer the questions.

Devising Language Games

by Ruth Wickham, ELTF at IPGKDRI.

The Purpose of Language Games:

- **Increase Motivation** – keep students interested and happy, competition motivates any students to try harder (and maybe there is a 'prize' at the end).
- **Make Language Learning Authentic** – they are practicing language for a particular situation, not just doing an exercise.
- **Thinking in English** rather than translating. In the middle of the game they need to come up with a fairly automatic response, there isn't time for translating.

Some Types of Language Games

There are many types of language games, all of which are adaptable to many situations. Some games can fit into several of these categories.) These include:

1. Board games: There are so many different board games available, you can easily make your own, and there are even templates available for making your own. A board game can be played with a partner, or in a group, or as a class with the 'board' drawn on the white/black-board.

- Students need counters – they can draw their own characters on paper/card, or use buttons/shells/rocks/whatever – or you can use magnetic buttons or 'tack' a piece of cardboard on the board, or just draw the counters as they move.
- There can be traps along the way – like the 'snakes' in 'Snakes and Ladders' – and rewards – like the 'ladders' – along the way.
- It's good if there is a language task each time they move along – they have to say something when they land on a square – with possibly a penalty (don't move/move back) if they fail.
- You need some kind of randomizer – a dice, or one/two coins, or some other clever method.

2. Card games: This can involve using

- <u>Playing Cards</u> as a randomizer (each number has a meaning, requires a particular response),
- specially designed <u>Language Cards</u> (a word or sentence or letter on each) for games designed like 'Snap' (turn over cards one at a time and say 'snap' when you see two the same, or two that match in some way), or 'Happy Families' (players try to collect sets of cards).
- Regular classroom <u>Flash Cards</u> with a word / sentence / letter on each. As a whole class activity – besides holding them up and asking the class to call out the answer –it can become a competitive or cooperative game. Individual/pairs/groups/teams of students can be asked to match the card(s), put them in a particular order, find the correct card from a display or heap, throw the card into a hoop or bin, guess what is on the card, draw or describe a picture for another to draw … the list is endless. (The cards may need to be laminated to make them durable, or just accept that you need to keep making more – especially as once the game is played many of the words will be 'known' and new ones will be needed anyway.)

3. Dice games: Obviously dice can be used for randomizing movements of counters in board games and the like, but they can be used for other specific language ideas as well.

- Create a largish dice out of card, and write a question word (who, what, why, where, when, how) - or other prompt for a different aspect of learning - on each face. Students / pairs / groups / teams have to use the appropriate prompt after throwing the dice.
- More than one dice can be used – maybe with a different letter on each, or a noun on one and adjective on another, or a word on one and an instruction on another.
- You can get dice with a lot more than 6 sides, for instance one for each letter of the alphabet – if you get one of these, there are obvious games you can play.

4. Word-Making Games: Commercial games such as '<u>Scrabble</u>' and '<u>Boggle</u>' can be played in the classroom in pairs/groups if you have enough sets. You could have several different games and groups rotate in different sessions. This type of game can also be played using cards with letters on (instead of the little tiles in something like Scrabble) and words can be formed on the floor or a desktop.

- Whole class games at the black/white-board can also be devised along these lines with a pool of letters that they need to make into words, or making little words out of a big word.

5. Circle games are especially relevant for young children but can also be used with good results with older children (and even adults!) In the circle it is easier for the teacher to maintain control of the game, and develops cooperation and community feel among the participants. If the class is too big, or the space not suitable, the game can be played in 2 or more smaller groups, although this is harder to maintain control of, and loses some of the community feel.

- The game can involve a <u>song/chant</u> which everyone joins in and then each participant in turn has to sing/say something.

- The game can involve <u>changing seat/position</u> in response to certain prompts – this can for part of the reward/penalty. There can be one less seat than the number of participants.
- There are many possibilities for <u>cumulative</u> circle games where one person makes a statement mentioning one object (such as "I went shopping and I bought … an egg") and subsequent participants have to repeat all previous items and then add one of their own. The game is cooperative, and keeps going as long as the group can manage it.
- Some examples of good circle games are "<u>I like People Who</u> …" (where participants who fit the description have to quickly change places, and the slowest one ends up standing and making the next statement) and "<u>What are you doing</u>?" (where participants each mime the action from the previous participant while naming a different action for the following participant to mime).
- Games like "<u>who stole the cookie</u>" – where participants pat knees/clap/click a rhythm and pass turns by calling someone's name – can be adapted to use other parts of language. Students can even each wear a word on a flashcard to be referred to and respond to.

6. Role play games are an obvious extension to conversational/speaking topics. These can be easily set up as a 'line-up role-play' where each student is part of a group which plays a particular role.

- For example: In a <u>shopping role-play</u> some students are sellers and some are buyers. Sellers need to have a list/pictures/objects to sell, and buyers have money and shopping lists. It can become competitive as individuals/pairs/groups endeavour to buy/sell a certain amount first.
- Other simple role-plays could include various community places/events such as doctor's rooms, post office, travel agent, hotel lobby, library, marketplace, student services.

7. Discussion games can be another type of role-play.

- For example: "Alibi". In this game a student/pair/group are accused of a crime and have to get together to clarify their 'story' of exactly where they were and what they were doing at the time of the 'crime' including as many details as possible. Other class members in pairs/groups are the police who will separate and question each of the suspects who rotate around the groups, and see if their stories match.
- Another discussion game can involve reading two texts (fiction or non-fiction). Half of the class reads one text and the other half reads the other. Then the papers are removed, and the students pair up with someone who read the other text. Each carefully tells their partner everything they can remember about their text. Then they swap to another partner who read the other text, and they are given a list of questions with which to test their new partner on what they have been told.

8. 'Game Show' and Quiz games can be a great whole class learning activity. Examples are

- '<u>Typhoon</u>' (where each team has to answer a question and can then choose a box from the grid. The box may contain points, or an opportunity to 'blow away' someone else's points),
- 'J<u>eopardy</u>' (modelled on the TV show of the same name),

- <u>'Wheel of Fortune'</u> (from the TV show), or a similar '<u>Hangman</u>'.
- All of these simply create a framework for winning points so that the students work together with their team and are motivated.
- <u>'Celebrity Heads'</u> can also be played by the whole class with 2/3/4 … students at the front facing the class with a famous name worn (as a crown, maybe) around their heads so that they can't see it (or it can be written carefully on the board behind them as long as they don't turn round to look …) They take it in turns to ask questions of the class in order to discover who they are. (They must be yes/no questions, and a 'yes' response means they can then ask another before their turn ends).

9. Drawing games: One well-known game is 'Pictionary' where one student/pair/team is shown a word/phrase/sentence and they have to draw something until the other student/pair/team guesses what it is. There are lots of ways to adapt this to learning objectives.

- To give practice in describing, a simple picture or drawing can be pinned to the back of a chair so that a person at the white/black-board cannot see it but the class can. They then have to explain to the draw-er what to draw. There can be rules about who explains, or they can just call out. There can be two draw-ers, and it can be made into a competition.

10. Vocabulary games:

- In the game of "Scattergories" players have to come up with vocabulary words which start with a particular letter. First of all select your categories (eg an animal, a fruit, a vegetable, a form of transport, a country, a body part, …etc). Then devise a method for choosing the letter – you can ask a student to say the alphabet silently in their head and someone says "Stop!" and the letter they are on is the one you use – or any method that works. Players/pairs/groups then rush to choose a word for each, and when the first one shouts to say they have finished then everyone must stop (or use some other time limit). Players get (for example) 5 points for any correct word no one else has, and only one point if someone else has the same word. Maybe swap papers to let someone else mark so less cheating!
- In the game "taboo" you need to prepare papers/cards with a target word (or phrase) and a number (usually 3) of 'taboo' words. The team/player has to explain the target word so that the other team/player can guess it, but is not allowed to mention the taboo words (all of which are the most obvious important words to the explanation.) Students/groups can be set the task of creating taboo cards for a future game.
- Bingo (below) is an excellent way to learn a body of vocabulary.

11. Competitions: Not all 'games' are competitions; sometimes the students must endeavour to cooperate rather than compete. Even in a competition, however, if the students are working in pairs/groups, they are still learning cooperation within their team. Anything can be made into a competition. "Let's see who can ……. the _____est" makes any simple activity into a game or competition. It is good to make sure that you don't do this all of the time, or maybe sometimes surprise them by going for the 'slowest' or 'smallest' so that they work carefully, and so that anyone has the possibility of being a winner.

12. Racing / Running / Jumping Games: Where children are the students, sometimes they just have too much spare energy. With care and planning, it is possible to play educational language games that allow them to run off a little of that energy, without doing damage to themselves, other students, or school property!

13. Singing / Chanting Games: Many of these are 'circle games', but singing and chanting games do not always have to be done in a circle. As a listening/speaking activity students can 'fill in the gaps' in a song once they have learnt it. The teacher/another student/a group can sing the song and stop and various students/groups have to carry on or fill in the words.

14. Games of Chance: Everybody loves 'Bingo', and this game can be adapted so many ways. There are programmes available on the Internet where you can enter (9/16/)25 words, and the programme will randomise the words so that every card contains the same words in a different order. Or you can add more than the required number, and then the students won't be sure if the word is on their card or not. There are other ways to play, too, where the caller does not read the words that are on the cards, but a clue or question for which the answers are in the grid on the cards. Students will need some form of counters to use as bingo markers (sunflower seeds work well – but you have to decide whether the students are allowed to eat them), rather than marking the cards, so that they can play the game several times over.

15. Story Games: Games can be created around well-known / traditional / recently studied stories, especially if there is a repetitive action or character to be named. Listeners must wait for a particular cue, and then perform a specific action. An example could be: the teacher tells the story of the 3 little pigs. Participants/groups are assigned particular characters (mother pig, 1st little pig, big bad wolf etc.) The group sits in a circle around the storyteller, and as the story is told, if their character is mentioned they must stand, turn around, and sit down again. The storyteller holds a (flimsy, harmless) roll of paper and attempts to swipe the backside of students as they turn. The story as it is told can be varied to have (for example) Mother Pig popping up repeatedly and unexpectedly. Alternatively, (for example) a student could tell the story, several students are assigned each character, and must swap places and risk losing their seat … the one left standing must continue the story.

Rewards and Penalties

In most cases, the chance to play the game is reward enough for young students (and even older ones)!

Within the game there must be a structure for some kind of reward to encourage both competition and cooperation, and the sense of penalty, some impending doom, adds to the excitement and urgency of the game. It is important that the penalty does not lead to embarrassment and belittling, that 'winners' and 'losers' both walk away happy, and that all students learn something whether they realise it or not.

The underlined element of chance, along with the need to perform in some way, increases the fun and reduces the embarrassment of losing – after all it could happen to anyone.
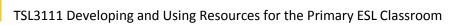
If the class seems to be becoming jaded, even with games to play, sometimes an actual reward can be added – something insubstantial like being allowed to leave the room first at the end, or being

clapped by the other team, or a small treat. If the same game is played again, make sure that the teams are mixed around.

Questions for 'Devising Language games':

1. What are three important reasons for using Language Games?

- ....
- ....
- ....

2. What 3 ways can you play board games in the classroom?

- ....
- ....
- ....

3. Explain how to make/find and use these 4 necessities for a **board game**:

- counters: ....
  ....

- traps and rewards: ....
  ....

- language tasks: ....
  ....

- randomiser: ....
  ....

4. How can you use regular playing cards in the classroom? ....

5. What are two games you can play with Language Cards containing words or phrases?

- ....
- ....

6. Name 5 ways (your own ideas or from the text) that you could use 'Flash Cards' in the classroom.

- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....
- ....

7. How can you use a dice to teach question words?

....

....

8. How could you use more than one dice?

....

....

9. Name two word-making games that can be adapted in various ways.

....

10. What is so good about circle games? ....

....

....

11. Give five examples (from your own ideas or from the text) of circle games.

- ....

- ....

- ....

- ....

- ....

12. Name five possible community places or events (from your own ideas or from the text) that could become a 'line-up role-play'.

- ....

- ....

- ....

- ....

- ....

13. What language would students especially learn / practise with the discussion game 'Alibi'?

....

....

14. What would the discussion game 'Two texts' help students to learn / practise?

....

....

15. What are the advantages of 'Game Show' type games?

....

....

16. Give examples (from your own ideas or from the text) of three Game Shows.

- ....

- ....

- ....

17. What do drawing games give practice in?

....

....

18. What is a well-known commercial version of a drawing game?

....

19. What do players have to come up with in the vocabulary game 'Scattergories'?

....

....

20. How do you prepare for a game of 'Taboo'?

....

....

21. What do the players have to do in a game of 'Taboo'?

....

....

22. What game is an excellent way to learn a body of vocabulary? ....

23. Which is better, competition or cooperation?

....

....

24. Why is it good to have energetic games sometimes?

....

25. Give an example of a game to play with a song.

....

Activity

1. Assembling raw materials

Work as a group to design at least one of each of the following teaching materials. You could actually create each object, or just write / prepare a presentation (not necessarily PowerPoint – be creative) to demonstrate how you would / could do it.

It might be worthwhile deciding on a topic/lesson/subject-area and age-group before you start.

a. Board Display

Design a display for a backboard or white board for teaching a lesson on a particular topic (maybe choose a topic from the KSSR text book). There is not generally time before a lesson to get everything onto the board, so plan what you will add at each point in the lesson (and parts you may need to erase as you go). You may include a game and/or opportunities for the children to add something.

b. Flash Cards

Design a set of flashcards to be used with a game. They may have something different on each side (e.g. a picture on one side and word on the other). Consider how big they would be, and what materials you will use and where you would obtain the materials. Explain how you would play the game.

c. Worksheet

Design a worksheet to suit a particular topic. Include a picture to colour in, and some words to write or copy (maybe in answer to a question. Create the worksheet yourself, do not download it!

d. Game

Design a game to be played during a lesson related to a particular topic. Describe all of the materials you need to involve all children in your game and explain the rules and purpose of the game.

e. Language Arts lesson using Play Dough

Find out how to make (not buy) cooked OR uncooked play dough in several colours. Design a lesson where you can make good use of this product. Explain how much you would need to make for each child to be involved, and the educational outcomes of such a lesson.

f. Puppet(s)

Describe how you would make (not buy) and use a puppet of a set of puppets. This could be for your performance as a storyteller and/or for the children to make and use. Explain the materials you would need, where you would get them, and how the puppet is created as well as the purpose or objectives of the lesson.

g. Story book(s) / Big Book

Describe how you would prepare materials for a shared reading session. This could be a Big Book (big enough for the children at the back to easily see) and/or a set of smaller books so that the children can each have and hold their own. Explain what the story / content is and how you would use it.

h. Movie / Slides plus audio

From still photos or scans create (or explain how you would create) a movie or presentation of a story being read. This could be done with something like MovieMaker or you could use PowerPoint with a set time on each slide (as in a Pecha Kucha presentation). You would need to read the story aloud, or have someone do it. The children should be able to watch the presentation on a computer or LCD projection.

i. Masks

Design masks for children to make and use, or for the teacher to make for a class production. Explain how you will make the masks comfortable enough for the children to wear while still being able to see and to say their lines. Describe the materials you would use. Explain what characters you would create and why.

2. Evaluation of prepared materials

Firstly create a checklist or rubric for evaluating the materials. Discuss as a group how the materials should be evaluated.

Extra Activity

This material relates more to finding information than finding teaching material for primary school.

Your main source of 'Raw Material' as far as information is concerned will be the Internet. In fact teachers nowadays often download lesson plans and ready-made worksheets from the Internet.

Johnson and Lamb write about things to consider when downloading information.

Web Evaluation

(Johnson & Lamb, 2013)

Criteria for Evaluation

Students need to learn to evaluate the quality of information they find on the web as well as other information resources such as books, magazines, CD-ROM, and television. Ask students to be sceptical of everything they find. Encourage them to compare and contrast different information resources. Consider the following ideas:

Authority. Who says? Know the author.

- Who created this information and why?
- Do you recognize this author or their work?
- What knowledge or skills do they have in the area?
- Is he or she stating fact or opinion?
- What else has this author written?
- Does the author acknowledge other viewpoints and theories?

Objectivity. Is the information biased? Think about perspective.

- Is the information objective or subjective?
- Is it full of fact or opinion?
- Does it reflect bias? How?
- How does the sponsorship impact the perspective of the information?
- Are a balance of perspectives represented?
- Could the information be meant as humorous, a parody, or satire?

Authenticity. Is the information authentic? Know the source.

- Where does the information originate?
- Is the information from an established organization?
- Has the information been reviewed by others to insure accuracy?
- Is this a primary source or secondary source of information?
- Are original sources clear and documented?
- Is a bibliography provided citing the sources used?

Reliability. Is this information accurate? Consider the origin of the information.

- Are the sources trustworthy? How do you know?
- Who is sponsoring this publication?
- Does the information come from a school, business, or company site?

- What's the purpose of the information resource: to inform, instruct, persuade, sell? Does this matter?
- What's their motive?

Timeliness. Is the information current? Consider the currency and timeliness of the information.

- Does the page provide information about timeliness such as specific dates of information?
- Does currency of information matter with your particular topic?
- How current are the sources or links?

Relevance. Is the information helpful? Think about whether you need this information.

- Does the information contain the breadth and depth needed?
- Is the information written in a form that is useable (i.e. reading level, technical level)?
- Is the information in a form that is useful such as words, pictures, charts, sounds, or video?
- Do the facts contribute something new or add to your knowledge of the subject?
- Will this information be useful to your project?

Efficiency. Is this information worth the effort? Think about the organization and speed of information access.

- Is the information well-organized including a table of contents, index, menu, and other easy-to-follow tools for navigation?
- Is the information presented in a way that is easy to use (i.e., fonts, graphics, headings)?
- Is the information quick to access?

Finding Website Evaluation Information

As you explore information on the web, keep in mind that there are many different types of information from research data to opinions. Start with an overview of the contents of the page. Can you determine the purpose and audience of the page? Does the page focus on information, news, advocacy, sales, or a mixture?

Search for Clues. Start by examining the page itself. Look at the web address (URL). What kind of domain (.edu, .gov, .org, .net, .com) is it? This doesn't always help, but it may provide an indication of the sponsor. Is it a government site, school resource, museum, commercial or private web project? Try to determine who published the page. Is it an individual or an agency? Can you find a name attached to the page? Look at the core page for the entire website (everything between the http:// and the first /) and see who sponsored the site and how information was selected. You might also try truncating the website address to see each level between slashes.

Sometimes you can answer these questions by reading the creation information at the bottom of the main page. Look for a name, organization, or email address. If you can't find the answer there, see if you can locate a page that tells "about the website." Sometimes there's a "contact us" page. The author of the page and the webmaster may or may not be the same person.

For information about the content of the page, look for a link to an author biography, philosophy, or background information.

Another hint about the quality of the website is the copyright date. When was the page originally posted? When was the last time the page was updated? This information is generally at the bottom of each page or at least the first page of the website.

Look for sponsors. Does the site use banner sponsors? What do they sell? Is a well-known organization a sponsor? Consider whether the site's sponsors could impact the perspective to the website. In most cases, a company wants the information at their site to reflect positively on them.

Ask Questions. If you still can't determine the quality of the information, consider emailing the webmaster and asking about the site's content. Students will be amazed at the range of answers that will be provided. Some webmasters post anything that's given to them, while others are experts in a content area field.

Track Backward and Forward. Another way to learn more about a website is to see "who links to them" and "who they link to." Use a search engine to search for the "URL" or author of the website in question. Does it appear on a "favourites" list? If so, whose list? Is this list credible? If the site has won an award, what are the criteria for the award and how is the award given? You can also track forward. In other words, look at the links that are used by the web developer of your site. Do they go to good or poor quality sites? Is this website cited in subject guides such as About.com or Librarian's Index?

Cross-Check Data. In addition to the act of evaluating a single page, students also need to learn to cross-check information. In other words, there should be three independent resources confirming each piece of questionable data. This cross-checking can be done different ways. For example, if students are creating a graphic organizer, they could star each item that has been doubled or triple checked. Consider using a variety of information formats including encyclopaedia, magazine articles, videos, experts, and web pages.

Filtering Information. When filtering information, students need to understand the spectrum of options between fact and opinion. Issues of perspective, point of view, and bias must be discussed. One of the advantages of using the Internet with students is the availability of so many examples. Students can see misinformation and propaganda in action. Give students the opportunity to question their findings and discuss their concerns.

Questions for 'Web Evaluation':

Start with a question. For example: "What is the best way to teach reading?" (Write your own Q!)

Question: ....…..............

Do a Google (or other) search. **How many hits** were there? ....
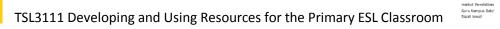
Choose (at least) two (2) sites. (Partners / group members could work on one site each.) Fill in as much information as you can to compare the sites.
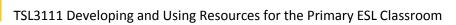
Find the website information:

<u>Overview of contents:</u> What is the purpose / Who is the audience? (e.g. information / news / advocacy / sales / mixture)	
<u>Clues:</u> What kind of domain is it? (e.g. government / school / museum / commercial / private)	
<u>Who published the site</u>? (e.g. individual / agency)	
Look at info at bottom of main page: Is there a link to author / biography / background info? When was page originally posted? When was the site/page last updated?	
Are there sponsors / Banner sponsors? Could sponsors impact perspective?	
Who links to them? Who do they link to? Cross-check information – do other (reliable) sites back up the information?	

Now answer these questions about the page / site and information.

Authority Who created this information and why?	
Do you recognize this author or their work?	
What knowledge or skills do they have in the area?	

Is he or she stating fact or opinion?	
What else has this author written?	
Does the author acknowledge other viewpoints and theories?	
Objectivity Is the information objective or subjective?	
Is it full of fact or opinion?	
Does it reflect bias? How?	
How does the sponsorship impact the perspective of the information?	
Are a balance of perspectives represented?	
Could the information be meant as humorous, a parody, or satire?	
Authenticity Where does the information originate?	
Is the information from an established organization?	
Has the information been reviewed by others to insure accuracy?	
Is this a primary source or secondary source of information?	

Are original sources clear and documented?	
Is a bibliography provided citing the sources used?	
Reliability Are the sources trustworthy? How do you know?	
Who is sponsoring this publication?	
Does the information come from a school, business, or company site?	
What's the purpose of the information resource: to inform, instruct, persuade, sell? Does this matter?	
What's their motive?	
Timelessness Does the page provide information about timeliness such as specific dates of information?	
Does currency of information matter with your particular topic?	
How current are the sources or links?	

Relevance Does the information contain the breadth and depth needed?	
Is the information written in a form that is useable (i.e. reading level, technical level)?	
Is the information in a form that is useful such as words, pictures, charts, sounds, or video?	
Do the facts contribute something new or add to your knowledge of the subject?	
Will this information be useful to your project?	
Efficiency Is the information well-organized including a table of contents, index, menu, and other easy-to-follow tools for navigation?	
Is the information presented in a way that is easy to use (i.e., fonts, graphics, headings)?	
Is the information quick to access?	

Report on your Web Evaluation:

As a group/pair prepare a report on your evaluation of at least two web sites/pages. Your report should include:

- Your Question and how many hits you had on your search.
- The names and URLs of the websites, and a brief statement of why you chose those ones.
- A brief report on the 'website information' that you discovered.
- A comment on each of the following:

- o Authority
- o Objectivity
- o Authenticity
- o Reliability
- o Timelessness
- o Relevance
- o Efficiency
- Your recommendations

Works cited in this topic

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Appendix: Play Dough Recipe

This **play dough recipe** is the cooked version, which uses cream of tartar. It tends to be smoother than the non-cooked play dough recipe, but it is more work and takes longer due to cooking and cooling. If you cannot get cream of tartar, don't worry. You can also add peppermint oil or vanilla powder, but this increases the temptation for children to snack on the play dough which is not dangerous but can lead to upset stomachs.

Play dough Recipe

Ingredients:

1 cup flour
½ cup salt
1 cup water
1 Tablespoon oil
2 teaspoons cream of tartar
Food colouring by drops

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a pan and stir. Cook over low heat, stirring until a ball forms.
2. Add food colouring and mix thoroughly until desired colour.
3. Cool. Store in covered container (in the fridge is best).

To increase – or decrease – the quantity, remember:

X amount of flour, X amount of water, and ½ X amount of salt.

This is an easier to make version of a play dough recipe, there is no cooking involved.

No-Cook Play dough Recipe

Ingredients:

1 cup salt
1 ½ cups flour
½ cup water
2 Tablespoons oil
A few drops of food colouring

Directions:

Mix all ingredients very well and store in plastic bag or covered jar.