

# A Heaping Scoop of Literacy, with a Side of Gamification

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## NUTRITION INFORMATION

Although young adults may be comfortable using technology to find information, recent high school graduates do not necessarily understand how to critically examine the information these tools yield. This recipe introduces undergraduates to information literacy and data literacy through an “escape room”-style workshop. Students escape the room by successfully completing timed challenges. These challenges help students develop the skills to be information and data literate “smart searchers” throughout their college experience. This workshop is best suited for undergraduates.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to do the following:

- Define and explain authority, information literacy, “fake news” (disinformation), and data literacy.
- Conduct smart searches by using key terms, narrowing or broadening focus, or by thinking about a search as a question.
- Create data visualizations and make theoretical data-driven decisions when presented with a data set.

## COOKING TIME

Approximately one hour

## NUMBER SERVED

Class size of approximately 15–20 students, broken into teams of two to three

## DIETARY GUIDELINES

This recipe provides a fun and interactive approach to literacy education, synthesizing the core skills of good search practices, determining source credibility and data analysis into a cohesive narrative. The workshop challenges closely align with the ACRL Frames Authority is Constructed and Contextual and Searching as Strategic Exploration.

## INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

The following ingredients are needed in order for this recipe to be “fully cooked”:

- For instructor(s):
  - ◊ computer and monitor/projector
  - ◊ a PowerPoint presentation
  - ◊ prizes (optional)
  - ◊ whiteboard and markers (optional)
- For students:
  - ◊ one computer per group of two to three students
  - ◊ pencils
  - ◊ worksheets

## COOKING TECHNIQUE

Short lectures, timed challenges for small

teams, and a scoring system to promote friendly and cooperative competition

## PREPARATION

- Create PowerPoint, including
  - ◊ agenda
  - ◊ key terms
  - ◊ directions for challenges
  - ◊ instructor contact information
- Test technology in the classroom and adjust room setup as necessary.
- Create scoreboard.
- Create handouts.

## COOKING METHOD

1. Introduce yourself and the topic. Set the stage and explain the escape room concept.
  - a. Students are investigative journalists working to uncover the truth about information literacy. The deadline for their story is in an hour and they’re running out of time. If they don’t make this deadline, the world will never learn the truth about information literacy, and they will be trapped in the lab!
2. Define information literacy.
  - a. Activate students’ prior knowledge. Ask any of the following questions to generate a brief discussion:

- i. Based on this definition on the board, what do you think information literacy means?
  - ii. What are some of the abilities that would help you locate, evaluate, and use information (searching, critical thinking, asking questions, etc.)?
  - iii. Do you think information literacy is important? Why?
  - iv. How do we use information literacy in real life?
3. Connect the topic to your learners. Briefly explain to students that knowing these terms and their implications in information searching will help them in the various research tasks and assignments they will complete throughout the course of their college career.
  4. Lay down the ground rules.
    - a. Three challenges:
      - i. fake news
      - ii. smart searching
      - iii. data literacy
    - b. Points:
      - i. First group to finish gets 3 points.
      - ii. Other finishers get 2 points.
      - iii. If the group didn't finish the challenge, they do not get any points.
    - c. To escape:
      - i. Get 5–9 points to escape the lab!
      - ii. Get only 1–4 points and you're trapped!
  5. The challenges. At the beginning of each challenge, provide students with a definition of the topic at hand. Include a Power-

Point slide or handout that contains tips to help students examine the topic with a critical lens. Review this information with students and make it available for them to refer to throughout each timed segment.

- a. Challenge #1: Fake News. Students are directed to different news articles online in the instructions on their worksheets and must decide whether they are fake or credible and explain why.
  - b. Challenge #2: Smart Searching. Students are presented with an image of a famous artwork and are not given any information about its title, creator, etc. They must use thoughtful keyword searches online to answer a series of questions about the artwork on their worksheets.
  - c. Challenge #3: Data Literacy. Students are presented with spreadsheets of dummy data and must make data visualizations and data-driven decisions in Microsoft Excel and answer supplemental questions about their process on their worksheets.
6. Wrap up. Announce who “escaped” the room and ask students to write a personal reflection of key takeaways. Engage students in a closing discussion on what they learned about fake news and information literacy and how they would explain smart search skills to a friend.

#### ALLERGY WARNING

- To avoid overwhelming students, try a gradual release model: present a few PowerPoint slides with key defini-

tions, then transition into one of the three timed challenges, and repeat this process for each challenge. Because fake news, smart searching, and data literacy are such dense topics, we chose to break the transferable learning into bite-size chunks for the students to digest.

- Time moves quickly in this workshop, and we were not always able to predict how long students would take to answer each question. Be alert to time constraints.
- In our experience, students struggled with satirical sources for challenge #1. They had difficulty differentiating between facts and jokes, especially if the satirical article was published by a source generally deemed credible.

#### CHEF'S NOTES

- Instructors can assess the impact of this recipe by handing out brief surveys for students to complete at the end of class.
- Similar to library scavenger hunts, escape rooms can also be used to expose students to key areas of a library.
- Instructors can modify the focus of the timed challenges to highlight certain topics depending on the audience and the overall nature of the instructor's role in the library they work in.
- Facilitators should be prepared to roam during challenges to provide encouragement and answer questions. We found it helpful to work in a group.