

GATHERING INFORMATION



AGENDA

- Starter
- The Box
- Info Search
- Fallout Shelter: Exploring Alternatives
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will recognize the importance of gathering relevant facts and ignoring irrelevant information when making a decision.

Students will learn that their prior experiences can direct them to good sources of information.

Students will apply the step of gathering information to the fallout shelter simulation.

Materials Needed

- 10 slides or large pictures of diverse groups of people, such as Asians, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Caucasians, men, women, teenagers, children, elderly people, well-dressed people, and so forth (Starter)
- Projector, if using slides (Starter)
- A cardboard box filled with various small items, including string, paper clips, toothpicks, one or two red items, and one or two blue items (Part I)

- One copy of “The Search” activity sheet for each student (Part II)
- One copy of the “Fallout Shelter Hidden Biographies” activity sheets for each role-playing volunteer (Each volunteer receives a unique biography.) (Part III)
- Fallout shelter folders (Part III)
- One copy of the “Fallout Shelter Biographies” activity sheet for each group (Part III)

Starter (3 minutes)

Show students the 10 slides or large pictures featuring varieties of people.

Ask students to write their answers to the following questions:

- Whom would you choose as a friend? Why?
- Whom would you like your sibling to have as a friend? Why?
- Which of these people would make the best teacher? Why?
- Which of these people would get your vote for president of the United States? Why?

Ask students how comfortable they are with their choices. Elicit from them that these decisions seem difficult because they do not know anything about the people other than their appearance. Point out that in order to make an informed decision, they would need more information.

Part I The Box (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize the importance of gathering relevant facts and ignoring irrelevant information when making a decision.

1. Students complete a task using relevant information.

Explain to students that you have a challenge for them. Draw their attention to the box containing the various small items.

Ask for a volunteer to come to the box. Inform the volunteer that they have 10 seconds to connect a red item and a blue item using paper clips, strings, or other items from the box. Dump the contents of the box on the floor or the table and say, "Go!" When 10 seconds have passed or when the student is finished, ask if anyone sees other solutions. Have these students connect the red and blue items they suggest.

2. Students discuss the importance of using relevant information to make decisions.

When students have exhausted combinations, ask students why no one attached irrelevant items. For example, hold up two items that were not red or blue and say, "Why didn't you connect these?" You might also hold up another item and ask, "Why didn't anyone use this to connect a red and a blue object?" Elicit from students that these things did not fulfill the requirements of the challenge.

Ask students why the solution was so easy. Elicit from them that they had the knowledge to recognize what was important in this exercise and what did not fit the solution. Point out that to make a good decision, one must have the relevant facts and ignore information that is unrelated.

Part II Info Search (10 minutes)

Purpose: Students recognize that their experiences can direct them to good sources of information.

1. Students recognize the importance of identifying appropriate sources of information.

Explain to students that sometimes they will not have all the important facts they need, which will require them to find additional sources of information.

Ask students, “Where would you go to find the scores of last night’s baseball (or another sport, depending on the season) game?” Encourage students to give several sources, such as sports websites, newspapers, and television. Ask students why they would choose those sources. Lead students to the understanding that they would choose those sources because they have found the information there before.

2. Students practice identifying appropriate sources of information.

Explain that students will practice identifying the appropriate sources of information for different situations. Tell students that they will be able to do this easily if they use their prior experiences and knowledge. Distribute a copy of “The Search” activity sheet to each student.

Allow students five minutes to complete the activity sheet. While students are working, write the five situations on the board.

When time has expired, have students share the sources of information that they felt were pertinent to each situation. Have two volunteers list the responses under the appropriate situation on the board. Elicit from students the greatest variety of sources possible. (Students might respond: libraries, reference books, atlases, encyclopedias, interviews with knowledgeable people, the internet, newspapers, magazines, clubs, organizations, and associations.)

Have students add any new sources of information to their worksheets. Suggest that students keep their lists of sources as an aid for research and information gathering. Explain that when they are trying to gather information, reviewing the list will help them uncover sources they may not immediately consider.

Part III Fallout Shelter: Exploring Alternatives (30 minutes)

Purpose: Students apply the step of gathering information to the fallout shelter simulation.

1. Volunteers prepare character roles for the fallout shelter simulation.

Explain to students that they are now going to return to the fallout shelter simulation to practice gathering information from different sources.

Ask for 10 volunteers to play special roles in this activity. Assign each volunteer a character to role-play. Give each volunteer one of the “Fallout Shelter Hidden Biographies” activity sheets and ask them to read the hidden biographical information quietly. Explain that the activity will require them to answer questions related to their characters. Instruct them to answer truthfully, creatively, and in character if there is a question not covered in the hidden biography. Instruct each volunteer to write down the answers to the questions they are asked during the activity so that they can give consistent information to any groups that ask similar questions.

2. Students receive biographical information about the characters in the simulation.

Have students return to their simulation groups; then, distribute the fallout shelter folders. Review the fallout shelter situation with students. Remind them that each group has to decide which four people will have to be eliminated from the shelter. Point out that the six people they choose to stay in the shelter may be the only six people left to start the human race again, so this decision is very important.

Distribute copies of the “Fallout Shelter Biographies” activity sheet. Explain that this is all they know about the 10 people. Read the sheet out loud:

- Bookkeeper, 31 years old
- Second-year medical student, member of militant group
- Famous historian, 42 years old
- The famous historian’s 12-year-old daughter
- Hollywood star, actor/actress
- Biochemist
- Member of the clergy, 54 years old
- Olympic athlete in track and field, world-class triathlete
- College student
- Firefighter

3. Students develop a list of questions to answer.

Explain to students that their task is to decide what they need to know in order to make the decision. They must develop a series of questions that will elicit the information they need about each person. Allow students 10 minutes to prepare their lists of questions.

4. The fallout shelter groups identify the sources that they would use to gather relevant information.

When 10 minutes have passed and the groups have completed their lists of questions, tell them that they must identify as many sources as possible to find the information they need. Give students two to three minutes to complete this task. Ask the class if they included interviews with the individuals as important sources of information.

5. Groups interview the fallout shelter characters.

Explain to the class that the teams are able to communicate with the fallout shelter site, so they will be able to ask reasonable questions of each of the individuals involved.

Ask the 10 volunteers to stand. Introduce each one as the character they are portraying.

Have the actors circulate among the groups for a few minutes and answer questions. Remind the actors that if they do not have information on the hidden bio to answer a specific question, they must make up an answer that is consistent with the character. Tell actors to write down the made-up information they give out so all groups that ask similar questions get similar answers. Instruct group members to take notes on the information they learn from the characters.

When time has expired, have students put all their materials in their group folders. Collect the folders from each group and put them aside until the next session.

Conclusion (2 minutes)

Ask students what they must do in order to make well-informed decisions. Ask students to explain the importance of discerning between relevant and irrelevant information. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- To make an informed decision, gather relevant information and ignore information that does not apply to the situation.
- Our own experiences can guide us to appropriate sources of information.
- Collect information from varied sources to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

Student Assessment

1. Imagine that you have been chosen to plan a class trip. List the information that you need to gather and how and where you would get this information.
2. Explain the differences between relevant and irrelevant information. List examples of relevant and irrelevant information in planning the class trip.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“Basic research is what I am doing when I don’t know what I am doing.”

Have a volunteer prepare a one-minute bio on Wernher von Braun, a German rocket scientist who came to the U.S. during World War II. Discuss the possibility of someone so accomplished not knowing what he’s doing.

Additional Resources

Invite a businessperson or government representative to speak to the class about choices they make, factors they consider in decision making, whom they consult, etc.

Have students write an article for the school newspaper (or a career newsletter) summarizing what they learned.

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Divide the class into small groups. Have each group make a list of 10 to 20 questions concerning famous decisions/decision makers (e.g., “Which president decided to free the slaves?”).

Have teams trade their lists and answer the questions. Award prizes in various categories. Have each student write a one-minute report on a different decision maker, what dilemma they faced, and how they arrived at a decision.

Using Technology

Show *Breaking Away* and/or *October Sky*, movies about kids who dream of escaping their small-town, working-class lives. The first is the charming story of Dave, a college-town kid who fancies himself an Italian bicycle racer. The second is the true—though highly romanticized—story of Homer Hickam, who, as a Sputnik-era youth, “went bonkers” about rockets and ultimately found work at NASA.

Have students list factors the main characters considered in the decisions to pursue their dreams.

Homework

Have students choose and research a controversial issue faced by a government official.

Have students list possible resources that could help the official make a decision about the issue.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students write about a decision they must soon make. Tell them to list possible sources of information that might help them make their decisions.

Have volunteers share their work with the class.

THE SEARCH

Where would you go to find information that could help you with the following situations? List as many sources as possible.

1. You have to write a research paper for history class.
2. You are writing an editorial for the school newspaper on a problem in your community.
3. You are searching for a part-time job to earn money.
4. You are interested in getting to know and possibly dating a new student in the school.
5. You are buying a new stereo system.

FALLOUT SHELTER

HIDDEN BIOGRAPHIES

INSTRUCTIONS:

You are going to role-play one of the characters based on the biographical information below. You are not to tell anyone, including other characters, about this additional information. If you are asked a question that is not covered by this information, you may make up your own answer that is consistent with the character. Write that answer in the notes section below. Always give the same answer to the same or similar questions.

BOOKKEEPER, 31 YEARS OLD

Hidden Biography

You have invented a machine that converts any plant into gasoline. You love sports of all kinds. You are an excellent fisherman. You are a convicted felon.

NOTES:

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SECOND-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT

Hidden Biography

Despite being a gifted student, you have learned that you will be expelled because you fell behind in your studies due to time spent on political activities. Your family has spent nearly all the money it has on your education. You are an excellent sculptor and artist.

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FAMOUS HISTORIAN, 42 YEARS OLD

Hidden Biography

You have a photographic memory. Since you are well read, you are knowledgeable about history, carpentry, and handiwork. You are married with one child. Your spouse is a United States Senator.

NOTES:

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THE FAMOUS HISTORIAN'S 12-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER

Hidden Biography

You are a top student, a talented flutist, and a competitive gymnast. As an only child, you are used to a great deal of attention from adults. Adults enjoy your company very much. Sometimes, you have difficulty getting along with other children your age.

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MOVIE STAR

Hidden Biography

You are a computer wizard. Your first starring role in a movie is to be released in two weeks. You have written three hit songs under a stage name.

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BIOCHEMIST

Hidden Biography

You are antisocial. You can't stand to be around people. You are bitter about a recent divorce. You write poetry in your spare time.

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MEMBER OF THE CLERGY, 54 YEARS OLD

Hidden Biography

You have just learned that you have one year to live. You recently returned from a world conference on religions, where your keynote speech was widely acclaimed. You worked on an oil rig while you were in college.

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OLYMPIC ATHLETE IN TRACK AND FIELD, WORLD-CLASS TRIATHLETE

Hidden Biography

In order to compete, you have taken performance-enhancing drugs. You are a vegetarian and can't stand the sight of meat. You have a strict training and diet regimen. If your routine is disturbed, you become aggressive.

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COLLEGE STUDENT

Hidden Biography

You are an engineering major. You can design and build many types of structures using whatever materials are available. You are also very knowledgeable in electronics and how to repair them. You are known at your school as being a social climber, and you only associate with the “in” group.

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FIREFIGHTER

Hidden Biography

You are a health fanatic and very strong. You are known to be very helpful to people who know you. You recently won an award for a program you created for children experiencing homelessness.

NOTES:

FALLOUT SHELTER BIOGRAPHIES

Bookkeeper, 31 years old

Second-year medical student

Famous historian, 42 years old

The famous historian's 12-year-old daughter

Hollywood star, actor/actress

Biochemist

Member of the clergy, 54 years old

Olympic athlete in track and field, world-class triathlete

College student

Firefighter