

Civic Online Reasoning Sequence Ideas for Middle and High Schools

Students are confused about how to evaluate online information. We all are. [The Civic Online Reasoning \(COR\) curriculum](#) provides free lessons and assessments that help you prepare students for civic life in the digital age by teaching students to skillfully evaluate online information about issues that affect them, their communities, and the world.

Based on their observations of professional fact checkers at the nation's leading news outlets, the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) identified the strategies experts use to sort fact from fiction on the Internet and developed a curriculum to improve student reasoning about websites, viral videos, social media posts, and more. [Research studies have shown](#) that students in COR classrooms improved significantly in their ability to evaluate online sources.

Middle School Sequence

The Internet makes it possible for anyone to publish online, making a wide variety of sources readily available. This can be a strength of the Internet, as it democratizes the creation and sharing of information and enables new forms of civic participation, but it also means that we must learn to investigate who is behind information, what evidence is provided, and what other sources say. Otherwise, we risk being duped.

This module opens with a formative assessment to measure your students' baseline skills for evaluating online content. Next, teachers use three lessons that introduce students to crucial habits and skills for sorting fact from fiction on the Internet. Students are tasked with making a recommendation to their school board about whether to extend the school week one day by mandating Saturday school. Students read arguments about mandatory Saturday school, investigating who is behind information and how the source's motivations could affect what is presented.

Please note that the sources included in the first three lessons are fictional accounts that the SHEG team has created, often citing real sources and evidence. We've done this to help students zero in on the most salient aspects of evaluating each source. In this way, we can support

students to develop new reasoning skills without overburdening them with complicated content that requires background knowledge.

After the three Saturday School lessons are two lessons that introduce *lateral reading*—a strategy used by fact checkers that entails leaving an unfamiliar website and opening new tabs to search for what trusted sources say about the site. Reading laterally leads us to more accurate judgments about digital content, allowing us to make better informed decisions and thus take more effective action in our communities.

Short intro for students:

From elections to the environment to health to equality, there are so many issues that affect us and our community. When we want to learn more about these topics, where do we often turn? The internet. But it can be hard to tell what's true and what's false online. In this unit, you will learn strategies to improve how you judge information online. Knowing what to trust and what to ignore will help you find better information. This will allow you to make informed decisions about issues that matter to you and those around you. As a result, you'll be able to create positive change in your community and the world.

For middle school teachers, the Stanford History Education Group recommends the following:

1. Assess students' baseline with 3 tasks.
 - a. [Website Reliability Assessment - Carbon Dioxide](#)
 - b. [Webpage Comparison Assessment](#)
 - c. [Evaluating Videos Assessment](#)
2. Teach content-neutral intro to the 3 Questions lessons.
 - a. **DAY 1** [Intro to Who's Behind the Information? Saturday School Lesson](#)
 - b. **DAY 2** [Intro to What's the Evidence? Saturday School Lesson](#)
 - c. **DAY 3** [Intro to What Do Other Sources Say? Saturday School Lesson](#)
3. Teach lateral reading lessons
 - a. **DAY 4** [Intro to Lateral Reading Lesson - level 1](#)
 - b. **DAY 5** [Lateral vs. Vertical Reading lesson - level 1](#)
4. Assess students' progress with 3 parallel tasks.
 - a. [Website Reliability Assessment - Climate Change](#)

- b. [Webpage Comparison Assessment - Animal Testing](#)
 - c. [Evaluating Videos Assessment - Child Soldiers](#)
- 5. (Optional) Teach intro to the 3 Questions lessons with online content.
 - a. [Intro to Who's Behind the Information? Lesson - level 1 or 2](#)
 - b. [Intro to What's the Evidence? Lesson - level 1 or 2](#)
 - c. [Intro to What Do Other Sources Say? Lesson](#)
- 6. (Optional) Incorporate additional opportunities for students to practice lateral reading with [this template](#).

High School Sequence

The Internet makes it possible for anyone to publish online, making a wide variety of sources readily available. This can be a strength of the Internet, as it democratizes the creation and sharing of information and enables new forms of civic participation, but it also allows misinformation to proliferate online. In order to use the Internet for effective civic participation, we must build skills to effectively evaluate digital sources, evidence, and claims. Otherwise, we risk being duped.

This module opens with a formative assessment to measure your students' baseline skills for evaluating online content. Next, teachers use three lessons that introduce *lateral reading*—a strategy used by fact checkers that entails leaving an unfamiliar website and opening new tabs to search for what trusted sources say about the site. Next is a lesson introducing *click restraint*—the skill of resisting the urge to immediately click on a top result of a search engine results page and instead pausing to make an intentional decision about where to click first. The final lesson focuses on how to verify claims made on social media.

Learning the skills of lateral reading, click restraint, and verifying social media claims can improve our judgments about digital content, allowing us to make better informed decisions and thus take more effective action in our communities.

Short intro for students:

When we want to learn about issues that affect ourselves and our community, like elections, the environment, health, and equality, where do we often turn? The internet. But it can be hard to tell what's true and what's false online. In this unit, you will learn strategies to improve how you judge information online. Knowing what to trust and what to ignore will help you find better information so that you can make informed decisions about issues that matter to you and those around you. This will help you to create positive change in your community and the world.

For high school teachers, the Stanford History Education Group recommends the following:

1. Assess students' baseline with 3 tasks.
 - a. [Website Reliability Assessment - Carbon Dioxide](#)
 - b. [Webpage Comparison Assessment - Duke Wikipedia](#)
 - c. [Evaluating Videos Assessment - Voter Fraud](#)
2. Teach [lateral reading](#) lessons.
 - a. **DAY 1** [Intro to Lateral Reading Lesson - level 2](#)
 - b. **DAY 2** [Lateral Reading Resources & Practice Lesson](#)
 - c. **DAY 3** [Lateral vs. Vertical Reading Lesson - level 2](#)
3. Teach [click restraint](#) lesson.
 - a. **DAY 4** [Click Restraint Lesson - level 1 or 2](#)
4. Teach verifying claims on social media lesson.
 - a. **DAY 5** [Verifying Claims on Social Media Lesson](#)
5. Assess students' progress with 3 parallel tasks.
 - a. [Website Reliability Assessment - Climate Change](#)
 - b. [Webpage Comparison Assessment - Animal Testing](#)
 - c. [Evaluating Videos Assessment - Child Soldiers](#)
6. (Optional) Provide additional lateral reading practice.
 - a. [Lateral Reading About Renewable Energy Lesson](#)
7. (Optional) Provide additional click restraint practice.
 - a. [Practicing Click Restraint Lesson](#)
8. (Optional) Teach evaluating evidence lessons.
 - a. [Evaluating Evidence Lesson](#)

- b. [Evaluating Evaluating Videos Lesson](#)
 - c. [Evaluating Photos Lesson](#)
 - d. [Evaluating Data Lesson](#)
 - e. [Evaluating Evidence About Climate Change Lesson](#)
9. (Optional) Provide additional practice with verifying claims on social media.
- a. [Porvenir Massacre Lesson](#)
10. (Optional) Incorporate additional opportunities for students to practice lateral reading with [this template](#).