

Information Literacy in Teaching: A Checklist

This resource was developed by the Fall 2025 STAR Scholars faculty learning community offered by the Center for Information Literacy and the Center for Faculty Excellence at Simmons University. Here we share our favorite insights on information literacy from the readings, lectures, and discussions throughout the semester. We hope this checklist will help instructors from all disciplines teach students to identify, evaluate, and use information effectively in the digital age.

What is Information Literacy?

An information-literate individual has the ability to recognize when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and effectively and ethically use that information. These are general competencies (skills, knowledge, and dispositions) that manifest differently across disciplines.



Verifying Information

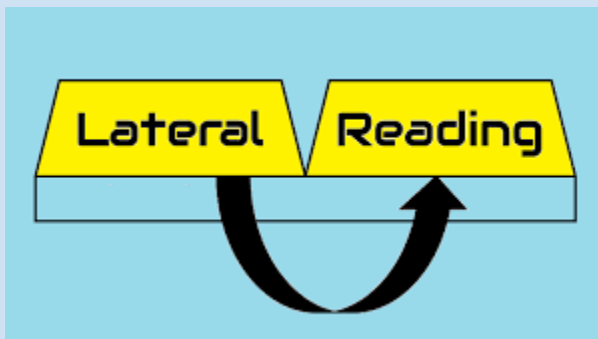
The **SIFT Method** is an approach to information literacy designed by digital literacy expert [Mike Caulfield](#). It consists of four moves: **Stop**, **Investigate the Source**, **Find Better Coverage**, and **Trace Claims, Quotes, and Media to the Original Context**. SIFT focuses on **lateral reading**—leaving the original site to see what the rest of the web says about it.

- **Stop:** Before you read, share, or react, pause. Ask yourself if you actually know the source or the reputation of the claim. If you feel a strong emotional reaction, that is a signal that you must stop and verify, as misinformation is often designed to trigger high-arousal emotions.
- **Investigate the Source:** Instead of looking at what the sources say about themselves, look at what *other* people say about them. Open a new tab and search for the author or organization.
- **Find Better Coverage:** Sometimes you don't need to investigate the source; you just need to find the truth. Look for a "trusted" version of the same story. If you see a sensational headline, search for the key claim. Is a major news outlet or a fact-checking site covering it? If they provide a more nuanced version, use that instead.
- **Trace Claims, Quotes, and Media to the Original Context:** Trace the sources of claims. If an article quotes a "shocking new study," find the actual study. If a video shows a politician saying something controversial, find the full unedited clip to ensure it wasn't taken out of context.

Lateral Reading

Lateral reading is the practice of leaving the website that one is currently using and consulting with several other reliable websites across the internet. The goal of this practice is to effectively evaluate the original source's credibility. This process is in direct contrast to vertical reading (staying *within* one single source to find answers or information).

- Developed by the [Stanford History Education Group \(SHEG\)](#), the [use of lateral reading has been studied](#) and shown to assist with revealing information such as biases, intent, factuality of claims and credibility of the author(s) on the original webpage.
- [A 2025 meta-analysis by Fendt and colleagues](#) set out to evaluate varying interventions with respect to source credibility assessments. They discuss how lateral reading interventions are more effective than other approaches, citing how this technique may more closely replicate search behavior and the information environments of today.
- Encouraging students to engage in lateral reading can greatly assist them with navigating the online (mis)information landscape. Providing a more practical and immediate benefit, lateral reading may foster more intrinsic motivation... as it aligns more closely with current information-seeking practices.



AI and Digital Literacy

- While it is wise to have a general AI policy on your syllabus, it might be even more useful to have a conversation with students about AI in class. Students need to understand the rationale of your AI policy: How does the use of AI change one's learning outcomes? What are the ethical and social impacts of AI? What are the concerns about data privacy, intellectual property, and academic integrity?
- The use of AI and other digital technology should depend on the level and the learning objectives of the course. For example, in a first-year survey course, you might want students to memorize basic facts instead of relying on technology. But in an upper-level undergraduate or graduate course, you may wish to increase students' digital literacy to assist their research.
- If you allow students to use AI for certain assignments, it can be really helpful to teach [prompt engineering skills](#) so that students can get better results.
- It is important to maintain human oversight in AI-assisted learning. You can require students to write a reflection statement explaining what they changed or verified.
- Teach students how to cite AI using the latest [MLA/APA/Chicago](#) standards and how to write a ["Statement of AI Use"](#) when they use AI for academic purposes.
- If you wish to restrict the use of AI in your class, consider activities and assignments that are engaging to students and not easily replaceable by AI (called "authentic assessments"). For instance, instead of a traditional annotated bibliography, students might be more motivated to write an in-class essay that connects their personal experiences to the course content.

– Understand the limitations of Large Language Models. Be aware of the cutoff date of the training data and where your discipline’s data might be thin, which could lead to more frequent hallucinations in those areas.

– Consider accessibility when teaching with AI and other digital tools. Some students can afford “Pro” AI subscriptions while others cannot. Do you provide access to institutional/free versions? Do you provide alternative formats of the course material and alternative assignments for diverse learners?

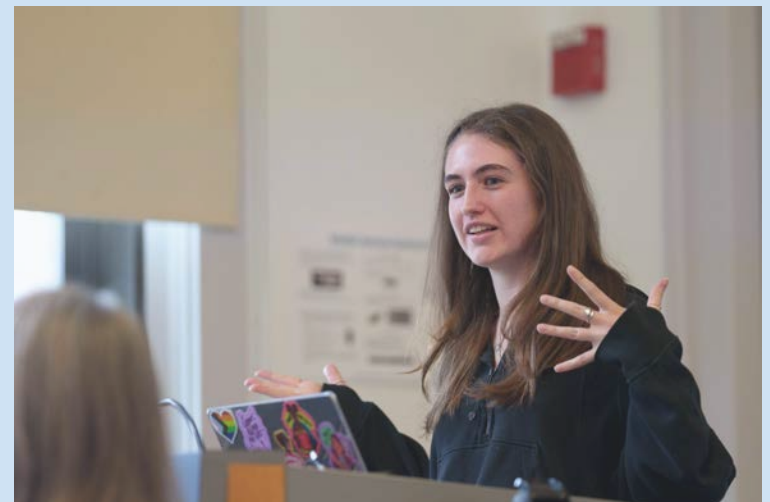
Intellectual Humility

Intellectual Humility is recognizing one’s own intellectual strengths and weaknesses ([Van Tongeren et al., 2019](#)), being open to the possibility that one may be misinformed or uninformed ([Gorichanaz, 2021](#)), and changing beliefs in response to evidence ([Church & Samuelson, 2017](#)). It is one of several intellectual virtues required for good thinking. Intellectual virtues are not intuitive traits but rather skills to cultivate over time. These tips for cultivating intellectual humility in students came from one of our guest speakers in the Fall 2025 STAR scholars program, [Tim Gorichanaz, PhD](#), who has published widely on this topic.

- Create assignments where students can practice searching for information in multiple places, revisiting the prompt, and reviewing the results in detail.
- Ask students to justify and explain their answer (based on James Lang’s book [Small Teaching](#)). For example, for each question on a quiz, have students respond to the prompt, “Why did you choose that answer?”
- Spark curiosity (see Todd Kashdan’s book, [Curious?](#))
 - Use throughline questions (questions that students repeatedly confront during the course) to engage

students with the big questions related to the discipline (based on Ron Ritchhart’s book, [Intellectual Character](#)). Weave the questions into discussions and activities throughout the course.

- Help students ask their own questions using the Question Formulation Technique. Details on this technique are outlined below.
- Enhance psychological safety to create a safe place for students to explore the limits of their knowledge, share ideas, ask questions, and be wrong.
 - Use student names to create a sense of connection.
 - Model being vulnerable, admitting being wrong, sharing your reasoning, being open to changing your mind.
- Provide exemplars for students to emulate.
 - Ask students, Who is your intellectual hero? Why do you admire them? How can you emulate them?
 - Share your intellectual heroes with students.
 - Model open-mindedness and updating beliefs when new evidence becomes available.



Boosting Curiosity and Critical Thinking through Evidence Discomfort

Tool: The Question Formulation Technique (QFT)

- The QFT is a [very useful workflow](#) that facilitates the skill of learning to ask a “good” question.
- Introduced in the book, [‘Make Just One Change’](#) by Rothstein and Santana, this [step-by-step protocol](#) encourages students to effectively formulate and utilize their self-developed questions.
- The QFT discusses four essential rules for producing questions:
 1. Ask as many questions as you can.
 2. Do not stop to discuss, judge, or answer the questions.
 3. Write down every question exactly as it is stated.
 4. Change any statement into a question.
- The QFT fosters a sense of ownership in student education and thus drives more curiosity and intention with learning. [Practical application example here.](#)
- The Right Question Institute also has developed a tool for [assessing effectiveness of your facilitation](#) of the QFT in the classroom.

The QFT, on one slide...

1) Question Focus

2) **Produce Your Questions**

- ✓ Follow the rules
- ✓ Number your questions

3) **Improve Your Questions**

- ✓ Categorize questions as Closed or Open-ended
- ✓ Change questions from one type to another

4) **Strategize**

- ✓ Prioritize your questions
- ✓ Action plan or discuss next steps
- ✓ Share

5) **Reflect**

1. Ask as many questions as you can

2. Do not stop to discuss, judge or answer

3. Record *exactly* as stated

4. Change statements into questions

Closed-Ended:
Answered with “yes,” “no” or one word

Open-Ended: Require longer explanation

RQI

Source: The Right Question Institute

rightquestion.org