

Activity Title: Source Ranking (aka “Survival of the Fittest”)**Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to

- Identify the author and purpose of a source
- Retrieve a source record in the library’s main search
- Assess a source’s value and fit for a given information need

Estimated Time: 20-25 minutes

Resources:

- An information need prompt; for example: Your friend is struggling with procrastination and is looking for sources that might help them with their time management.
- 5 index cards for each student in your class
- One manila envelope for each student in your class
- A large whiteboard or virtual whiteboard tool (such as Padlet, polleverywhere, etc.)

Summary: This activity gets students moving around in the classroom, and is an opportunity for them to begin thinking about the ways in which a source’s “quality” or value is at least partly dependent on the information needs they’re trying to meet. Each student will receive one of two sets of five sources, each source printed or written on individual index cards. They assess and rank their own sources, then pair up with a student with the other set to combine theirs into a ranking of 10, and finally share their rankings on the board for the class to discuss as a whole.

Try to emphasize to students that they should be thinking about what specific information they could get out of each source to meet the information need, and from there what qualities of the source would make it more or less valuable to them. During discussion, you can point out that some sources might be higher quality than others overall—in accuracy or currency, for instance—but it’s still important for a source to actually help them answer their question.

Instructions:

- Hand each student a manila envelope containing one of two sets of five source index cards. Ideally, students sitting next to each other should have alternating sets so that they can easily pair up for the second part of the activity. So, for example, if two students are sitting at the same table, one should have source set A and the other should have source set B.
- Working individually, students look up their five sources in the library’s main search, and then briefly describe them in their own language, addressing questions such as “What is it?” and “Who wrote it?” and “How is it written?”
- Still working individually, students rank their 5 sources from best to worst, where “best” means “most useful and appropriate for this information need.” Students may wish to physically rearrange their cards to reflect their ranking.
- Have students pair up with a student with the opposite source set, then work together to combine their cards into one ranking of all ten sources.
- Once each team has agreed on a ranking of their sources from best to worst, they go up to the board (or use the digital whiteboard) and share their rankings in a table (example below).
- Lead the class in a discussion based on the results in the table, asking teams to share their rationale.

Sample table format, with one team's sample student vote marks; the columns are the rankings, the rows are the sources, and each team writes one mark in the column for the ranking they assigned each source:

	#1 (Best)	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7	#8	#9	#10
(Source name 1)	I									
(Source name 2)			I							
(Source name 3)		I								
(Source name 4)						I				
(Source name 5)										I
(Source name 6)				I						
(Source name 7)					I					
(Source name 8)									I	
(Source name 9)								I		
(Source name 10)							I			