The Truth Detectives: How to Sort Fact from Fiction and Make Great Decisions

Materials Needed:

- Paper and pens/pencils
- Markers or highlighters (helpful for color-coding evidence)
- Access to a device (computer, tablet, or phone) and internet (optional, for deeper research extension)
- Pre-prepared "Evidence Evaluation Checklist" (printed or written)
- Two contrasting source materials for the 'We Do' activity (e.g., one clearly biased advertisement for a new game, and one neutral review of the same game).
- "School Project Leader Profiles" for the 'You Do' activity (see activity description).

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. **Define and explain** the difference between raw information and "significant" information.
2. **Identify and use** a three-step checklist to evaluate the accuracy and credibility of a source.
3. **Formulate a sound judgment** and justify your decision using specific evidence extracted from competing sources.

Success Criteria

You know you have succeeded when you can:

- Explain *why* you ignored certain pieces of information and *why* you focused on others.
- Present a clear decision based on facts, not just feelings.
- Point to the specific evidence that supports your final choice.

A. The Hook: The Mystery of the Missing Lunch

Educator Talking Point: Imagine you are the detective. Someone left a note saying your favorite snack was stolen! One friend says they saw an older student take it (Source A). Another friend says they saw a squirrel running away with a similar package (Source B). How do you figure out the truth and decide who or what to blame? You can't just rely on the first thing you hear, right?

This lesson is about becoming a 'Truth Detective.' We're learning how to look past the noise and find the real, reliable clues that help us make smart decisions, or what we call **sound judgment**.

B. Key Terminology (Plain Language)

- **Significant Information:** The facts, details, or data that actually matter to the decision. (Example: The size of the squirrel's teeth matters; the color of the thief's shirt probably doesn't.)
- **Accurate Information:** Information that is true, reliable, and confirmed by good sources.
- **Sound Judgment:** A decision or conclusion that is logical, fair, and based on strong evidence.

C. I Do: Modeling the Evidence Checklist (Direct Instruction)

Educator Talking Point: We need a tool to make sure we don't accidentally use inaccurate or insignificant information. This is our Evidence Evaluation Checklist:

The 3 Pillars of Reliable Information

1. **Source Credibility: Who said it?**
   - Is the person or organization an expert? (A doctor vs. a random person on social media.)
   - Do they have a reason to lie or be biased? (A company selling a product vs. an independent reviewer.)
2. **Evidence/Data: What proof is there?**
   - Are there real facts, statistics, or quotes?
   - Is the evidence recent? (A study from 2023 is usually better than one from 1985.)
3. **Logic Check: Does it make sense?**
   - Do the facts actually lead to the conclusion?
   - Are they ignoring important facts that might change the outcome?

Modeling Example: (The educator takes a simple news claim, like "New study proves eating carrots makes you instantly better at video games.")

"*Let's check this claim. 1) Who said it? A gaming company that sells carrot-flavored energy drinks. Hmm, they might be biased. 2) What proof? They show a statistic that '95% of carrot eaters feel faster.' But wait, who did they survey? Maybe only 10 people! Not strong evidence. 3) Does it make sense? Not really. Conclusion: This is probably inaccurate and insignificant information.*"

D. We Do: Analyzing Competing Sources (Guided Practice)

Activity: Fact-Checking the Mega-Game

The learner and educator review two pre-prepared sources about a hypothetical new video game, "Cosmic Quest 7."

Source 1 (Biased): A full-page, flashy advertisement from the game company promising "Guaranteed Happiness and Ultimate Power! 5-star reviews across the board!"

Source 2 (Neutral): A review from a well-known, independent gaming blog showing gameplay statistics, listing known bugs, and scoring the game 3/5 stars.

Step 1: Extracting Significant Information (Learners highlight or write down only the specific claims and data from each source.)

Step 2: Applying the 3 Pillars Checklist (Q&A and Discussion)

1. **Source Credibility:** Which source is more trustworthy? Why? (Answer Focus: The ad has a profit motive; the blog has a reputation to uphold.)
2. **Evidence/Data:** Which source uses concrete facts (bugs, load times, specific scores)? (Answer Focus: The blog uses measurable data; the ad uses vague emotional words like "ultimate.")
3. **Logic Check:** Does Source 1's claim of "5 stars across the board" match Source 2's score of 3 stars? (Answer Focus: They contradict each other. We must reject the less credible claim.)

Transition: Now that we know how to identify significant, accurate information, let's use it to make a real decision.

E. You Do: Formulating Sound Judgment (Independent Application)

Activity: Choosing the Project Leader

The goal is to select the best student leader for an important school-wide charity drive. The learner must use only the evidence provided in the profiles to make their choice and justify it.

Scenario Setup:

Review the profiles of two candidates for the "Charity Drive Leader" position. Your sound judgment will determine who gets the job.

Candidate A: Marcus	Candidate B: Zoe
"Everyone knows Marcus. He's the most popular kid in the grade and always fun to be around. He promises a pizza party if the drive succeeds. His previous fundraising event (last year's bake sale) raised $50, but he lost the receipt. He says he has "great leadership potential."	Zoe is quiet and organized. She led the school recycling program for 2 years, increasing participation by 30%. She has a detailed, typed plan showing predicted costs and revenue for the charity drive. Her last project budget was off by only $2. She is not promising any parties.

Your Task Steps:

1. **Identify Significance:** Highlight or underline the significant, accurate information in each profile (Focus on measurable data, not feelings or popularity).
2. **Filter for Accuracy:** Cross out any information that is vague, unverified, or biased (e.g., "always fun to be around," "promises a party," "lost the receipt").
3. **Formulate Judgment:** Based ONLY on the remaining significant evidence, which candidate should be the Project Leader?
4. **Justification:** Write a short paragraph explaining your choice using bullet points referencing the specific facts you extracted.

F. Closure and Recap

Formative Assessment Check:

1. What is the difference between "raw information" and "significant information"?
2. Name one of the three pillars we use to check if information is accurate.
3. Why is it dangerous to make a judgment based only on how popular a source is?

Educator Talking Point: Every day, you are presented with millions of facts—on social media, in the news, and from friends. Your job is now to be a detective, filtering out the noise and prioritizing the real data. This skill helps you buy better products, choose better leaders, and make better personal choices.

G. Summative Assessment and Reflection

Assessment Task: The learner presents their justification for choosing either Marcus or Zoe, reading their final paragraph aloud. The educator assesses whether the justification relies on verifiable evidence (Zoe's 30% increase, Zoe's detailed plan) rather than popularity (Marcus).

Success Criteria Review: Did the learner successfully apply the Evidence Evaluation Checklist to the

profiles?

H. Differentiation and Extension

Scaffolding (For learners needing extra support):

- Pre-highlight the significant information in the "Project Leader Profiles" and ask the student only to focus on step 3 (formulating the judgment).
- Provide a template sentence starter for the justification: "I choose [Candidate Name] because the significant evidence shows they have [Fact 1] and [Fact 2]. I ignored the claim that [Irrelevant/Biased Claim] because it was not verified."

Extension (For advanced learners):

- **Real-World Application:** Have the learner choose two real, conflicting news headlines or articles (e.g., about climate change, local politics, or technology) and apply the 3-Pillar Checklist to both sources.
- **Counter-Argument Challenge:** Ask the learner to write a short paragraph defending the candidate they did NOT choose, but they must use only the insignificant/biased information (e.g., "Marcus is the best because he is popular and promised a pizza party!"). This helps them recognize the weakness of relying on poor evidence.