

## Preparing to vote

## ACTIVITY



60 minutes  
approximately

# Clever and knowledgeable

This activity introduces voters in training to various sources of information. Participants will learn to think critically about a range of news sources, especially during an election campaign.

## OBJECTIVES

*Become familiar with different sources of information*

*Learn to apply critical thinking skills*

## LINKS TO THE QUÉBEC EDUCATION PROGRAM

**Subject area:** Languages

*Competency: Read and listen to literary, popular and information-based texts*

**Broad area of learning:** Media literacy

*Focus of development: Understanding of media representations of reality*

**Cross-curricular competencies:** Use information and exercise critical judgment

## MATERIAL REQUIRED

- ✓ Internet access
- ✓ A variety of information sources (both good and bad) related to candidates, the election or issues (newspaper and magazine articles, news stories, advertisements, interviews, program excerpts, websites, social media posts, etc.)
- ✓ Copies of the Voters in Training activity sheet

## ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY

Ask participants what they know about different sources of information:

- Where can you find out more about a topic? Google? Newspapers? Social media? Television programs? The radio? Family and friends?
- Can you name any sources of information on candidates, elections and current events in your community?

## A BIT OF THEORY

During an election campaign, responsible citizens need to remain aware of what is going on, what is being proposed and what is being debated. This makes it possible to form an opinion on the different options available and, on polling day, to make an informed choice. Various sources of information are available:

- print media (weekly and daily newspapers, magazines and other periodicals);
- radio and television;
- websites (news sites, political party sites, interest group sites, blogs, etc.);
- social media.

### Not all sources are reliable

No matter where you get your information, you need to make sure it's reliable, relevant and accurate. There is an incredible amount of information available online! This can be convenient, but it also means that you need to be vigilant, think critically and verify sources.

Here are some key things to consider when determining if you can trust a piece of information:

- **The author is credible.** What is the author's title? Is the author a specialist in the field? Is the information published by an institution of higher learning, a professional association, a public or quasi-public agency, or a news organization? Those are all examples of reliable sources. Important clue: "Anonymous" sources are not credible sources.
- **The facts can be verified.** Rather than relying on just one source, be sure to corroborate the information. Have other media organizations reported the same news item? If so, the information is more likely to be reliable.

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- **The information is up to date.** Pay attention to an article's publication date, along with the dates of any studies or references it mentions. For example, if an article refers to a study conducted several years ago, you should question the reliability of the information. Look for more recent studies on the same topic.
- **The content is objective.** Information presented in a neutral and objective manner tends to be more trustworthy. Also, if a headline seems a little too catchy, you should start asking questions!

**SUGGESTED STEPS**

1. Introduce participants to the information provided in the section titled "A Bit of Theory."
2. Divide the group into teams of two or three.
3. Provide each voter in training with an activity sheet. Tell participants they will need to pay close attention to separate the good information sources from the bad ones.
4. Take the various sources of information you have collected and distribute them among the teams.
5. Ask each team to complete the table provided in the activity sheet. Remind participants that critical thinking is key to determining whether information is reliable, relevant and accurate.
6. Next, review the work completed by the teams by asking the members of each one to share their findings.
7. Start a discussion with participants by relating the activity to the election:
  - Was it hard to find good sources of information?
  - Why is it important to be well informed before you vote?
  - What kinds of information would help you decide who to vote for?



## ACTIVITY SHEET

To make informed choices, you need sources of information that are reliable, relevant and accurate. Review the sources of information you have been given and record your observations in the table below. Will you be able to separate the good information sources from the bad ones?

### GOOD OR BAD SOURCE?

Name of the source and title of the news item	What to look for			Good or bad source?
	Credibility <b>CLUES</b> Who published the news item? Is the author well known?	Accuracy <b>CLUES</b> Can you corroborate the information? Is a publication date provided? Is the information up to date?	Objectivity <b>CLUES</b> Is the news item neutral and objective? Is it an advertisement? Does it express a point of view? Do the arguments make sense?	

**Broaden  
Your  
Horizons**

It will soon be time for the election simulation. You may already have an idea of which candidate you want to vote for. Over the next few days, keep your eyes open for information on the election and keep your critical thinking skills sharp! You should also try to discuss the topic with people close to you. This will help you confirm your current choice or else cause you to change your mind.