Being digital

Self–assessment: Finding information

1: Introduction

Digital literacy skills empower you to work effectively and safely online whether you're at work, studying or at home. They can also help you when it comes to applying for jobs. This questionnaire is one of four that will help you to learn the skills you need to succeed in a digital age.

This questionnaire is made up of **nine** questions related to how familiar and confident you are with using effective search strategies to find information online, and keeping up-to-date with areas of interest. At the end of all the questions feedback is given on each of them.

Learning outcome
By the end of this activity you should be able to identify which skills you need to become more confident in **Finding information**.

Question 1
How confident are you at …

… knowing what kind of information it is possible to find on the web, and which types (news, opinions, experience, theory etc.) would be most appropriate for your needs. Do you know where to find different types of information?

   A. I'm very good at identifying the correct type of information, and I know where to go for it.

   B. I don't know about different types of information, and wouldn't know if a particular type was more appropriate to what I'm looking for, than another.

Question 2
How confident are you at …

… knowing what kind of information you can find in an online library? Do you know what materials are offered by your university, school or college library?

A. I'm fully aware of what my online library can provide, and use it to find relevant materials.

B. I've visited libraries in person before, but I've never explored what might be available online.

Question 3
How confident are you at …

… using keywords commonly used in your discipline to search for information online? Are you able to pick keywords that reflect the purpose of your search (work, study, social)?

A. I am confident when it comes to choosing keywords.

B. I try to use appropriate keywords, but don't always get the results I expect.

Question 4
How confident are you at …

… using advanced search options to limit and refine your search? Do you know how to use these to limit your search to a particular time frame, region, language, file type or reading level, to get better results?

A. I know about advanced search options, and am confident when it comes to using them.

B. I haven't used an advanced search before, and am not confident that I know how it can help to improve the way I search for information online.

Question 5
How confident are you at …

… knowing when to change your search strategy or to stop searching?

A. I'm confident in my approach to searching, and know when to change my search strategy.

B. I'm not sure that I would know of any alternative strategies to use if my search results are not leading me to the information I need.

Question 6
How confident are you at …

… filtering large numbers of search results quickly? If you are faced with a large number of search results, do you know how to make the necessary judgements, including using advanced search functions, to get to the most relevant information quickly?

- A. I am used to dealing with large numbers of search results, and make good use of advanced search functions when I search.

- B. I don't feel confident dealing with large numbers of search results, and rarely or never use advanced search functions.

Question 7
How confident are you at …

… scanning and skimming a web page to get to the key relevant information quickly?

- A. I'm used to scanning and skimming, and have found it very useful.

- B. I've heard of this, but have never been taught how to do it effectively.

Question 8
How confident are you at …

… keeping up-to-date with news in your subject area, by using online social networking sites?

- A. I'm confident that I know how to use social networking sites to find information and keep up-to-date.

- B. I don't use social networking sites to find information or keep up-to-date.

Question 9
How confident are you at …

… keeping up-to-date with information from authoritative people or organisations by subscribing to RSS feeds? Do you know what an RSS feed is, and how to use one effectively?

A. I am confident with RSS feeds and use them to keep up-to-date.

B. I've never used RSS feeds before, but would like to find out more about how they can help me keep up-to-date.

The aim of this activity has been to give you an idea about how confident you are at finding information online.

The **Being digital** website can help you to improve your skills in areas where you are less confident (where you rated yourself as option B).

If you were very confident overall (where you rated yourself as option A), you might still benefit from working through some of the activities.

For topics that you are less confident in, you can improve your skills by working through the relevant **Being digital** activities which have been suggested in Appendix A (Feedback on the self-assessment questions).

The links in Appendix B below are a reminder of the **Being digital** activities that can help you to improve your skills in this area.

Appendix A: Feedback on the self-assessment questions

Question 1

Even if you are confident in knowing what kind of information it is possible to find on the web, it's always worth revisiting any guidance you can find for additional hints and tips. You will find a list of links to relevant **Being digital** activities in Appendix B.

If you can assess the type of information you need, you will be able to target your search to sites that provide specialist information. This will result in more focused search results.

This activity will provide some tips on how to focus on finding the right types of information for your search requirements:
The information universe

Question 2

Even if you are confident in using an online library, it's always worth revisiting any guidance you can find for additional hints and tips. You will find a list of links to relevant **Being digital** activities in Appendix B.

Many places, like the Open University, offer students access to an online library. Today's online libraries provide access to a range of resources – downloadable journals and publications, advice on developing study skills, support material and online video and audio, to name just a few. It's worth getting to know what your online library offers.

These activities provide some information on using online libraries, in particular the Open University library:
What is the online library?
Getting started with the online library
Explore library resources

Question 3

Even if you are confident in selecting and using keywords, it's always worth revisiting any guidance you can find for additional hints and tips. You will find a list of links to relevant **Being digital** activities in Appendix B.

Most of us choose a couple of obvious terms to put into a search engine, and hope that we get relevant results. Your search will be more focused if you know exactly what you're looking for, and can choose appropriate keywords that reflect this.

This activity will provide some tips on how to use keywords to refine your search:
Choosing good keywords

Question 4

Even if you are confident in using advanced search options, it's always worth revisiting any guidance you can find for additional hints and tips. You will find a list of links to relevant **Being digital** activities in Appendix B.

You can refine your search, and get fewer, but more relevant results, by using the advanced search option of your preferred search engine.

This activity will show you how to use advanced search options to refine your search:
Target your Google search

Question 5

Even if you are confident in changing your search strategy, it's always worth revisiting any guidance you can find for additional hints and tips. You will find a list of links to relevant **Being digital** activities in Appendix B.

Knowing when to stop and think about using alternative search strategies to find what you are looking for will save you time, and help you to get to the information you need much quicker.

These activities provide information on some common pitfalls of searching and how to avoid them, and some tips on how to filter search information:
Search slips and tips
Filtering information quickly

Question 6

Even if you are confident in filtering large numbers of search results, it's always worth revisiting any guidance you can find for additional hints and tips. You will find a list of links to relevant **Being digital** activities in Appendix B.

Filtering search results quickly is about developing your own judgement and critical skills. Search engines also provide tools that enable you to

filter your search results by refining the search criteria you've used. This can save a great deal of time, and avoid restarting your search from scratch.

This activity introduces you to the process you might go through when dealing with large numbers of search results:
Filtering information quickly

Question 7

Even if you are confident in scanning and skimming web pages, it's always worth revisiting any guidance you can find for additional hints and tips. You will find a list of links to relevant **Being digital** activities in Appendix B.

You can learn how to scan a series of pages to find the ones that are most relevant to what you are looking for. You can also learn how to skim the content on a page to find the sections that contain the information you need.

This activity will help you to develop scanning and skimming skills:
Scanning and skimming a web page

Question 8

Even if you are confident in keeping up-to-date using social networking sites, it's always worth revisiting any guidance you can find for additional hints and tips. You will find a list of links to relevant **Being digital** activities in Appendix B.

Social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook can be valuable sources of information for work and study. They can be used to share up-to-date information on specific areas of interest.

These activities will help you to use social networking as a source of information:
Keeping up-to-date using online networking
Making the most of Twitter
Social networking – is it for me?

Question 9

Even if you are confident in using RSS feeds, it's always worth revisiting any guidance you can find for additional hints and tips. You will find a list of links to relevant **Being digital** activities in Appendix B.

An RSS feed supplies updates to websites by alerting you to new content as it is published. This is done through a free subscription, and the information comes to you, rather than you having to look for it.

These activities provide information on what RSS feeds are, and guidance on how to use them effectively to keep up-to-date:

RSS in plain English
Keeping up-to-date using RSS
Being digital pathway: Keeping up to date

Appendix B: Checklist of useful Being digital and Library activities

New activities are being developed on a regular basis, and will appear on the site over the coming months. The following is a checklist of activities referred to in this self-assessment activity.

Activity name	URL
Being digital pathway: Keeping up to date	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/pathways/12/12
Choosing good keywords	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/101/index.htm
Explore library resources	http://www.open.ac.uk/library/library-resources/explore-library-resources
Filtering information quickly	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/63/index.htm
Getting started with the online library	http://www.open.ac.uk/library/help-and-support/getting-started-with-the-online-library
The information universe	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/102/index.htm
Keeping up-to-date using online networking	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/43/index.htm
Keeping up-to-date using RSS	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/106/index.htm
Making the most of Twitter	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/73/index.htm
RSS in plain English	http://www.commoncraft.com/video/rss
Scanning and skimming a web page	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/107/index.htm
Search slips and tips	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/108/index.htm
Social networking – is it for me?	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/89/index.htm
Target your Google search	http://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/objects/90/index.htm
What is the online library?	http://www.open.ac.uk/library/library-information/what-is-the-online-library