

LESSON PLAN 38: PERSONAL NEWS

Objective: Finding and learning about current news topics

Age range: 8-18

Just starting a new project and need to learn the latest news on a particular topic? Or want to keep up to date with breaking stories? Or do you want your students to learn about a particular topic for an assignment?

There is plenty of news on the Web but sometimes it's hard to track down exactly what you want – and you may want to change what you read depending on what you're working on at the time.

RSS feeds work fine if you want information on the same things from the same source. The same can be said for the daily/weekly newsletters provided by most online news services.

PERSONALISED NEWS

If you're looking for information on a specific subject or a way for students to learn about a particular topic when they start a new project, there are a number of Web tools that provide a round-up of news from a variety of sources that may just do the trick. They're like a daily online newspaper filled with the news you want to hear about.

You can make a lesson out of setting them up – and/or use the method as a research tool.

YOU WILL NEED

Computer. Internet access. Topic for news.

DEVELOPING SKILLS

Research, planning, news gathering, media and communications

LEARNING OUTCOMES

How to identify, find, evaluate and interpret sources of news.
Increasing knowledge of a subject area.

METHOD

1. Talk to your class about news. What is it? How is it gathered and presented? Introduce the different types of media that exist (newspaper, TV, radio, online) and how they operate. Explain how they differ in the way they present and interpret news and current affairs. You could take the opportunity to talk about the concept of a free press, censorship, advertorial content, and other issues surrounding the collection and presentation of news.
2. Discuss their experience with the news. What do they like and dislike about the news? Do they trust/believe what they hear? Why?
3. Identify the type of news you're looking for – perhaps as background for a project or assignment ... or just general ongoing information.
4. Sign up to a news aggregating services to learn about specific news topics – here are four you could try.

Daily Me (<http://dailyme.com>)



Simply Headlines (www.simplyheadlines.com)



Google News (<http://news.google.co.nz>)



Meehive (www.meehive.com)



5. Each site will require registration and for you to select the types of news you'd like to hear about. For example, Simply Headlines takes you through a list of news categories to choose from, including:

- World News
- Business
- Entertainment
- Politics
- Tech & Gadgets
- Blogs

Within each category, you can then select from different news sources. So, for example, the business section offers news from organisations such as:

- BBC News
- FT.com
- Forbes.com
- Reuters
- MarketWatch.com
- New York Times
- CNN

Each service operates slightly differently. Google News uses both categories and a keyword system, where you choose specific words to follow in the news.

6. Once you've selected your preferred sources, you can choose your format and delivery options.
7. Now all you have to do is sit back and wait for the news headlines to come to you.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. If it's just general, ongoing news you're after you can stick with your selections of news sources – or maybe try alternatives, just to see what they unearth.
2. However, if it's something specific, you can change your selections to meet specific project/assignment needs. So, last year, you could have been following news on the Beijing Olympics; currently you could be following the credit crunch, Michael Jackson, Swine Flu, or protests in Iran.

