

PART I: INFORMATION DIET LOG ASSIGNMENT*

Objective: The primary objective of this activity is to raise our awareness about the types of information we consume and help us become better consumers of information. A secondary objective is to provide you with an opportunity to gather specific data (in this case, about your own behavior) and to analyze that data objectively in writing.

Introduction: Imagine that the information we read or listen to from sources like books, newspapers, magazines, the Internet, radio, television, etc. is analogous to food. You consume information the way you scarf down a burger and fries. And just as the type of food you eat contains either essential nutrients (steamed broccoli and grilled salmon) or empty calories (Pringles and Coke), the type of information we “consume” likewise has either essential “nutrients” or “empty calories.”

Building on that analogy, we’re going to begin the semester by examining our information consumption habits objectively. What does your information “diet” look like? There are two parts to this assignment: the first part is to log every thing you read, watch, or listen to for a specified number of days. Include only in this log everything you “consume” that’s related to information. The second part will be to analyze your data and evaluate information diet.

To make this assignment successful, it’s important to be precise. For example, let’s say you get much of your news from Facebook. Suppose someone posted a link to an article and you followed the link and read the article. In your log, you would note that you found the article on Facebook, but you would also mention the name of article you read and where it was posted. So that entry might look like this:

SOURCE	TIME
Facebook/article on Huffington Post called “Cyclone Phailin Threatens Tens of Thousands in Eastern India”	15 minutes

Directions:

1. Keep a record of what you READ, WATCH, and LISTEN to as sources of information. Do not include music, movies, TV, or other sources that would be considered entertainment.
2. Maintain this record as best you can for 5 days. Keep in mind that the more data you collect, the more reliable your analysis will be. You may use the Log Sheet I’ve created for you (posted on Canvas) or you may design your own method of record-keeping.
3. When recording your information source, identify the **source** (e.g., MSNBC, Huffington Post, Breitbart.com, PBS NewsHour, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and an **estimate of the amount of time** you engaged with this source.

Log is due _____ .

* If you’re interested in learning more about the Information Diet, go to <http://www.informationdiet.com/>