A Guide to Creating Your DocsTeach Activity

Once you register for an account on DocsTeach.org and log in, one of the things you can do is choose primary sources and pull them together into an activity using one of the DocsTeach tools.

Your students will be able to engage in your activity online at a direct URL such as http://docsteach.org/activities/16. Your activity will have a teachers guide too, like the one at http://docsteach.org/activities/16/detail. Your finished activity might even be borrowed by other teachers on DocsTeach.

Get started by exploring the tools.

Navigate to ACTIVITIES and click on Create. Explore the seven available tools. Be sure to click on …more to:

- read about the learning objectives that each one can help you meet,
- find teaching tips, and
- explore examples of activities created with a particular tool.

Decide which tool you will use. But read on before you start creating your activity.

Gather primary sources for your activity.

Navigate to DOCUMENTS. Browse by Historical Era or Type of document to get a sense of the kinds of primary sources and topics you can find. Search using keywords, turning filters for historical eras or types of documents on or off.

As you find a document that you want to use in your activity, bookmark it by clicking Star This next to the document. Star all of the documents you want for you activity (as well as any you want to bookmark for other activities).
Open the activity-creator.

Navigate back to **ACTIVITIES** and click on **Create**. Click on **Create an Activity** for the tool you’ve chosen to use. The activity-creator will open and begin to guide you.

Pull in your documents.

- After you’ve clicked **Continue**, click on **Find Documents**. You’ll recognize the next screen as the same one where you explored documents earlier.

- **Browse** to your.

- For each document you want in your activity, click on **Next** next to it.

- When you’ve finished, click on **Back to Activity** in the top-right corner of your screen.

Drag your documents into your activity.

How you arrange your documents will depend on the tool you chose. Follow the instructions in the activity-creator. You may need to write a question, write hints, pair documents, etc. Continue through to the next step by clicking **Next**.

Write an introduction and conclusion for your students.

You will be prompted to “**enter introduction text**” that your students will see right away when they open your activity. See the box that pops up to start the activity “Birth of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)” at **http://docsteach.org/activities/2243** as an example.
Make sure you:

- identify the topic,
- provide any necessary historical context,
- give direction and instructions so that students know what they are expected to do, and
- are general enough that if a teacher borrows your activity, it will make sense to his/her students too.

You will also be prompted to "enter conclusion text" that your students will see after they've engaged in your activity and clicked on I'm Done. See the "I'm Done" section in “Birth of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)” at http://docsteach.org/activities/2243 as an example.

The conclusion effectively wraps up the activity for your students. You can include further instructions for classroom discussion or participation, or follow-up questions for students to answer in an email to you. Write questions that will require students to carefully analyze and think about the documents they saw and to reflect on what they learned while doing the activity.

Continue through to the next step by clicking NEXT.

Prepare a teachers guide for yourself and teachers who may borrow your activity.

You will provide information about how to teach with your activity in the last step of the activity-creator. Keep in mind that this will generate a teachers guide for any teacher who finds it on DocsTeach. (For example: http://docsteach.org/activities/7678/detail)

Complete all fields:

- **Activity Title**
  Plainly state the topic and/or what students will do in your activity. (Check that there isn’t already an activity on DocsTeach with your proposed name.)

- **Activity Author**
  Include your first and last name.

- Choose the most appropriate selection from the drop-down menu for: **Historical Era, Primary Historical Thinking Skill, Bloom’s Taxonomy**.
● Synopsis
Write a brief overview of what to expect. Teachers should be able to read this and quickly decide if the activity is appropriate for their classroom and curriculum. It’s helpful to include key vocabulary and names.

● Author’s Notes
Explain how to teach with this activity.

  ○ Indicate where the activity fits into the curriculum and why a teacher might use this activity.
  ○ Give an appropriate grade-level range.
  ○ List the approximate amount of time needed to complete the activity.
  ○ Provide a step-by-step approach for using your activity in the classroom.
  ○ Write as if you’re writing a note to yourself or writing a lesson plan.
  ○ Note whether the activity is meant for a full class, a small group, or an individual student.
  ○ Include historical background that other teachers might need.
  ○ Don’t be so specific to your own classroom that others can’t use it.

Preview.

Once you’ve filled in all of the fields, click on Save & View to preview the teachers guide for your activity. Click on the large screen shot of your activity or on Start Activity to open your activity in a new window or tab and preview it as one of your students would see it.

Edit.

Review your activity and teachers guide. Check that there are no spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors. Make sure the instructions are clear and that the activity can stand on its own: that anyone accessing the activity knows what they’re being asked to do.

Once you’re done reviewing the activity itself, close the window or tab and return to your teachers guide.

Click on Back to Activity to return to the activity-creator. Make any changes you want, and continue to preview and edit your activity as needed.

(Your activity is now saved in your Account, where you can access it at any time.)
Publish.

Once your activity is ready for your students, and your teachers guide is thorough and clear enough for other teachers to use, it’s time to “publish.” You will be able to share your activity with students by giving them the unique URL; and your teachers guide will be visible to anyone who is logged into DocsTeach or who has that unique URL.

In the last step of the activity-creator, click on Publish. Congratulations!

We might feature your activity.

If your activity is thorough, clear, follows the standards set out in this guide, and meets a curricular need on DocsTeach, we might feature it so that it is available to anyone who browses or searches for activities, even if they aren’t logged in. Typically, activities that fall into this category were created by National Archives staff. See the “Featured Activities” on DocsTeach.org (or any of the URLs in this guide) for examples.
ACCESS PRIMARY SOURCES.
Explore thousands of letters, photographs, speeches, posters, political cartoons, maps, patents, videos, audio recordings, graphs, legislation, telegrams, court documents, amendments, draft cards, executive orders, citizenship documents, census records, and more — covering a wide variety of historical topics, all saved for the American people at the National Archives.

FIND AND BUILD ONLINE ACTIVITIES.
Borrow from an ever-expanding collection of document-based activities created by the National Archives education staff and teachers around the country. Use or modify ready-made activities. Or create your own using the online tools:

- Focusing on Details
- Finding a Sequence
- Making Connections
- Interpreting Data
- Mapping History
- Seeing the Big Picture
- Weighing the Evidence

ENGAGE STUDENTS.
With hands-on access to primary sources and analysis techniques, students will form a connection to historical evidence and deepen their understanding of the past. Involve your whole class in an activity, or assign students to complete activities individually or in small groups on DocsTeach.org or the DocsTeach App for iPad. Activities align with Bloom’s Taxonomy and National History Standards.
Online Resources for Educators from the National Archives

National Archives and Records Administration  
www.archives.gov

This is the main web page for the National Archives which preserves and provides access to the federal government’s permanent records.

Teachers’ Resources  
www.archives.gov/education/

This website is the main portal for teacher resources at the National Archives. Visit it to find information on professional development, National History Day, special topics and tools, and many other resources.

Docs Teach  
www.docsteach.org

The newest website for educators based on the holdings of the National Archives. Search for documents, find ready-to-use activities based on primary sources, alter lessons created by other educators to fit your classroom needs, and create new and completely customized lessons right on the website.

Our Documents: The 100 Milestone Documents  
www.ourdocuments.gov

This website highlights the 100 Milestone Documents in American history from 1776-1965. It contains background information on each document, downloadable high-resolution images, and tools for educators.

OPA (Online Public Access)  
http://www.archives.gov/research/search/

OPA is our first step to providing a single search to records from several of our current systems, including the Archival Research Catalog (ARC), Access to Archival Databases (AAD), Archives.gov, and the Electronic Records Archive (ERA). As part of the NARA’s flagship initiative in our Open Government Plan, our new search is intended to make the permanent records of the federal government easier to find online.
Online Exhibits
www.archives.gov/exhibits

Find a treasure trove of primary sources from the numerous online exhibits. Exhibits include: Discovering the Civil War, Documented Rights, The Deadly Virus, The Way We Worked, and many more. Some exhibits include educational resources for classroom use.

Charters of Freedom Exhibit
www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters

The National Archives exhibit on the Charters of Freedom highlighting the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. The exhibit includes information on the making of the charters and the impact of the charters and biographical overviews of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention. A fun activity is to sign the Declaration of Independence!

Founders Online
http://founders.archives.gov/

Read and search thousands of records from George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison and see firsthand the growth of democracy and the birth of the Republic. Access the written record of the original thoughts, ideas, debates, and principles of our democracy. Search across the records of all six Founders and read first drafts of the Declaration of Independence, the spirited debate over the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and the very beginnings of American law, government, and our national story.

Presidential Timeline
www.presidentialtimeline.org

This website provides a single point of access to an ever-growing selection of digitized primary sources from the collections of the twelve Presidential Libraries of the National Archives. Available are documents, photographs, audio recordings and video relating to the events of the presidents’ lives. Also included are educational resources and activities for educators.

Don’t Forget to Visit the National Archives on:

- www.facebook.com/usnationalarchives
- www.facebook.com/nationalarchivesfortworth
- www.flickr.com/photos/usnationalarchives/
- www.youtube.com/USNationalArchives

Join the Education Updates Blog:
http://blogs.archives.gov/education/

Contact Fort Worth Education Specialist:

Jenny Sweeney
817.831.5917
jenny.sweeney@nara.gov
DocsTeach Tutorials on the National Archives’ YouTube Channel

http://www.youtube.com/user/usnationalarchives#grid/user/96883AFF763C6D40
The DocsTeach iPad App is available within the iTunes store.