**Student Handout: Data Source Evaluation Exercise**

**Objective:** To practice evaluating data sources for reliability and relevance in the context of data literacy.

**Instructions:**

**Step 1: Independent Data Search**

1. Individually, access the Data.gov Dataset Catalog (<https://www.data.gov/dataset>).
2. Browse the catalog and select a dataset that interests you or is related to your chosen topic.
3. Note down the dataset title, description, and URL.

**Step 2: Group Formation**

1. Form small groups of 3-4 participants.
2. Choose a spokesperson for your group.

**Step 3: Choose a Topic and Research Question**

1. As a group, select a specific topic or subject area related to the dataset you've chosen from Data.gov.
2. Define a research question related to your chosen topic (e.g., "What insights can be derived from the selected dataset?").

**Step 4: Evaluate the Data Source as a Group** For the dataset you selected as a group, evaluate the following aspects:

**Reliability:**

* Assess the credibility of the source (Data.gov). Is it a reputable platform for government data?
* Check the publication date of the dataset. Is it up-to-date and relevant to your research question?
* Discuss any information provided about the dataset's origin and methodology.

**Relevance:**

* Determine how directly the dataset addresses your research question.
* Assess whether the dataset provides the specific information you need to answer your question.

**Potential Biases:**

* Investigate whether there are any potential biases or limitations associated with the dataset.
* Consider factors that might introduce bias, such as data collection methods or agency affiliations.

**Step 5: Summary and Group Presentation**

* As a group, summarize your evaluation of the dataset, including its strengths and weaknesses.
* Decide whether you would trust and use the dataset to answer your research question.
* Prepare a brief group presentation to share your dataset evaluation and research question with the class.
* Be ready to answer questions and engage in discussion during and after your presentation.

**Step 6: Debrief and Discussion**

1. After all group presentations, participate in a class discussion.
2. Reflect on the challenges you encountered during the evaluation process and the insights gained.
3. Discuss the importance of critical evaluation of data sources in data literacy.

**Conclusion:** Data literacy involves not only understanding data but also being able to critically assess the sources of that data. This exercise helps you practice these essential skills using real datasets. Remember to apply your newfound knowledge to future data analysis endeavors.