



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).

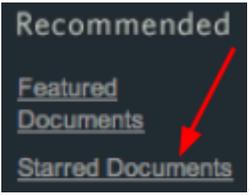


Open the activity-creator.

Navigate back to **ACTIVITIES** and click on . Click on  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 , click on . You'll recognize the next screen as the same one where you explored documents earlier.

-  to your . 

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

- When you've finished, click on  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 .

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  to preview the teachers guide for your activity. Click on the large screen shot of your activity or on  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  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 . 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.