



Fact Sheets

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What is a Fact Sheet?

A fact sheet is a short, typed or hand-written document that contains the most relevant information about a particular subject in the least amount of space. The goal is to provide facts and key points about a topic in a clear, concise, and easy-to-understand way. In developing a fact sheet, students must decide what is most important, organize it, and communicate it in their own words. All three of these practices relate to how people learn and are linked to increased retention of information. The fact sheet can then be used for class work and studying.

Typically, a fact sheet is a one-page document that quickly and efficiently communicates the most relevant information about a particular topic. Fact sheets may convey new facts or information such as a report of research evidence (Valente, 2005) or reinforce education strategies aimed at increasing knowledge (Weiler, 1998). Sometimes fact sheets are a summary of a longer document or an alternative to writing a detailed essay about a topic. To extend the use of a fact sheet beyond an individual student, different topics could be assigned to students and then they share their fact sheets during class (Weiler, 1998; Zimeri, 2016). This peer instruction reinforces students' understanding of the topic and increases the knowledge of their peers. Additionally, fact sheets can offer a clear report of research evidence (Valente, 2005).

Fact sheets have been extensively used to communicate health information. Research-based healthcare fact sheets were evaluated as excellent at efficiency, usefulness in practice, and importance at improving practice by 99% of nurses surveyed in a recent study (Valente, 2005). Most nurses stated that fact sheets were the best way to learn about research and use it in practice and reported using fact sheets in their personal and professional lives. While they used fact sheets to improve patient education and teach new nurses, how could you use fact sheets in your setting?

Implementation

1. Define the goal of the fact sheet. You will want to consider the following:
 - (a) Will the fact sheet be used for a class assignment or activity? Can it also be used for studying purposes? Can students use the fact sheet on an assessment?
 - (b) Are topics instructor chosen or are students allowed to select their topic aligning with the course? Instructors may choose to assign topics to meet course needs or students may be allowed to select their topic based on personal interest.
 - (c) Who is the target audience? Students should develop a message that is relevant and suitable for the intended audience.
2. Describe the purpose of fact sheets to your students or provide written instructions on how to create a fact sheet.





- (a) Emphasize that fact sheets are brief and report only the most important information about a topic.
 - (b) Encourage students to compile their classroom notes, textbook information, or facts from outside sources such as refereed journals, and published documents. Facts presented should be up-to-date, relevant, and verified from a reputable source.
 - (c) Remind students this should take approximately 30-45 minutes if summarizing previously presented material. It will take longer if students are researching the topic for the first time. For instance, Zimeri (2016) asked students to develop a main point in an interesting way and it took most students 1-3 hours to do so.
3. Provide students with a template. This allows the instructor to set specific section headings in the fact sheet, highlighting areas students should address. Pre-selecting a format that best fits the assignment is recommended, otherwise, students may become lost or confused by the plethora of results of a simple Google search on fact sheet templates.
 4. Students should share their fact sheet with their peers and continue to revisit their fact sheet by adding to it and/or revising it as necessary. Additionally, review of fact sheets by the instructor is recommended to ensure satisfactory completion. Without accountability, students may not take this activity seriously. Knowledge gaps or incorrect information may also be overlooked without others reviewing it.
 - (a) If the fact sheet is going to be distributed widely, pretesting its readability with the intended audience is suggested.
 - (b) The iterative process of revising and editing a fact sheet creates the ultimate study guide for a test.

Fact Sheet Suggestions

General fact sheet template guidelines:

1. *Title* - The title contains the subject of the fact sheet followed by the words 'Fact Sheet'.
2. *Introduction* - A brief summary (typically 1-3 sentences) describing the goal or main point of the fact sheet, followed by a bulleted list or outline of the key concepts or issues that will be addressed in the fact sheet.
3. *Body* – Divide the fact sheet into distinct sections. Present each section with a clear, informative heading followed by the most important facts about the topic. Remember that facts must be verified and relevant to the topic.
4. *References* - Make sure to use reputable sources and cite all sources used

Productive formatting for a fact sheet:

- 2 columns with 1" outside margins and 0.5" column margin
- Block paragraphs according to topic. (Be as concise as possible).
- Single spaced with double space between headings and sections
- Use fonts that contain easy to read characters
- Use color, italics, bolded text to organize and highlight information remembering that more isn't always better.
- 1-2 pages in length. If the fact sheet is longer than 2 pages, consider breaking up the information into two separate fact sheets.



Suggestions for presenting content in a fact sheet:

- Keep text brief
- Write in active voice
- Define key words or concepts
- Simplify complex ideas
- Give examples to clarify a concept
- Create graphics to reinforce information
- Provide easy-to-follow steps to describe a process
- Keep graphics simple and easy-to-understand
- Search for comparisons and everyday analogies to explain complicated processes
- Use bulleted lists, tables, and charts instead of narrative text

Weiler (1998) is a general resource for more widely distributed fact sheets and provides specific steps for creating fact sheets.

Frequently Asked Questions

- Where can I find fact sheet templates?* You can find a plethora of fact sheet templates by simply entering 'Fact Sheet Template' in your internet search bar. An example template used for online chemistry videos is provided at the end of this document.
- How can I use fact sheets in my classroom?* Students can create fact sheets to summarize material presented in online videos or textbook readings. Based on the content in the fact sheet, instructors can gauge whether the student did the readings or watched the video.
- What are the benefits of using fact sheets in my classroom?* For the instructor, fact sheets show how well students understand topics and connect concepts. For students, fact sheets are excellent study guides and a unique way to take notes for reading and video assignments. Fact sheets are also valuable resources during in-class active learning sessions. Moreover, students can share their fact sheets with other classmates to broaden and update knowledge about a topic.
- Wouldn't it be faster for me to just give students a fact sheet about a topic, rather than have students create one?* Yes, but it would be less useful to students. The most important step is the creation of the fact sheet. When students create the fact sheet, they have to determine what the key concepts are and what is important to know about those key concepts. This also allows the instructor to gain valuable information on how students perceive the presented material. If key information is missing from students' fact sheets, the instructor can further clarify and address the issue before moving on to new material.
- What is the difference between a fact sheet and a study guide?* Typically, study guides are either created by students with little instructor guidance before a test or they are created solely by the instructor and distributed before a test. In the former, students do not update the study guide regularly, which may cause them to overlook potential gaps and deficiencies in the study guide and in the latter, the instructor is the one who is benefiting most because they have to synthesize what is important, give definitions, and show examples. Fact sheets attempt to address both of these issues. Students should create fact sheets as the material is covered in class, use their fact sheets for in-class activities, and revise their fact sheets when there is a knowledge gap. This iterative process makes the fact sheet an integral part of learning. Final versions of fact sheets should be superior study guides for a test.
- Will the organization or format of a fact sheet differ based on discipline or course?* Yes! Instructors should create a fact sheet template that best fits their discipline and distribute the template to their students.

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- g) *How do I grade a fact sheet?* Grading rubrics will vary depending on the academic discipline. It could be based on a simple check plus, check, zero for completion (Teaching Tool: An Efficient Rubric for Minimal Assessment) or more specific criteria with feedback to students. Possible grading criteria may include: Is the resource sheet concise and to the point? Well-organized? Are all main concepts properly identified? Are the main concepts adequately described? Does the student provide examples of the concepts? Is there enough information given to generalize to a novel situation?

Other Resources

- Assignment: Fact Sheet
https://onlineteaching.kent.edu/library/online_assignments/Fact_Sheet_Handout.pdf
- Communication Tools: Fact Sheets
<https://ruralhealth.und.edu/communication/factsheets>
- Creating Fact Sheets on Local Issues
<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/fact-sheets/main>
- Creating an Agricultural Fact Sheet & Grading Rubric
https://serc.carleton.edu/integrate/teaching_materials/sustain_agriculture/student_materials/unit_6.html
- Fact Sheet Tips
<http://ccmc.org/tips/fact-sheet-tips/>

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