

COPING WITH INFORMATION

In this section you can discover ways of:

- making sense of information you have gathered
- dealing with information you have been given
- sharing information and resources with others



Key questions

There are many different sources of information available today, through the press, media, mail, literature, the Internet and computers, and you can easily find yourself swamped and unsure what to make of it or what to do with it next. Here is a list of different circumstances where people might find themselves overwhelmed with information. Has anything similar ever happened to you? Read the list and write about your experiences in the box on page 166.

- How do you make sense of the information leaflets given out by political parties during the run up to an election? How do you decide who to vote for?
- What do you do when you look up a subject on the Internet and find hundreds of sights listed under that heading?
- If you have to research a subject and manage to collect a range of information from journals, newspapers, TV, leaflets, books, web-sites, etc, do you know what to do with it next?
- If you are a member of a group how can you share information with other members so that everyone gets the information they need?
- If you are thinking of returning to study, how can you decide between different schools and colleges and the hundreds of courses on offer?
- You want your family to eat a healthy diet. How do you decide what is a healthy meal? How do you make sense of all the information available?
- How do you decide the advantages and disadvantages when buying a new piece of equipment for your home or work?
- If you have to arrange for a programme to be printed for your social club's annual concert, how do you decide which printer should do the work?



Activity 1

Have you ever been faced with a lot of information and not known what to do with it? Write about your experience here:

Key questions concerning information

Here are some questions to ask yourself to help you deal with information effectively.

- What do you want this information for?
- How are you going to use it?
- How are you going to share this information with other people?

Continually referring back to these questions should help you to decide whether something is useful or not.

- Can you divide the information into different categories or headings?
- Does the information you have provide a balanced view of the subject?
- Do you need all the different categories for what you are working on just now?
- Can you discard any of the information as unnecessary or pass it on to someone else who might want to use it?
- Do you want to look for more information so that you can consider other options or points of view?
- Does the information you have gathered answer your original question?



Activity 2

As a member of the committee you have been asked to arrange for programmes to be printed for your social club's annual concert. You have agreed to gather all the details of what is to be included in the programme and to find a suitable printer to do the job.

What information do you need?

Where will you find it?

How much information do you need?

Activity 2 continued

How will you present the information to the committee?



Activity
continued

How does your information on printing programmes link in with the work of other members of the committee?

Answering these questions should help you to sift out any unnecessary information. Arranging the remaining information into section headings should make it more manageable to deal with.

Store all the information you have gathered on a subject together. This means that it should be easy to find whenever you need it. You can do this using files, drawers, boxes, shelves, computer floppy disks, whatever you find convenient.

For further assistance on how to make use of information once you have it organised into a manageable form see:

- *Storing Information* in **Keys to Learning**
- *Planning and Writing Reports* in **Keys to Communications**
- *Planning an Informative Talk* in **Keys to Communications**



What have you learned?

Evaluation Questions

How might the questions in these *Activities* help you to make sense of information that you have to deal with? When could you use them?

How can you make sure that you have enough information on a subject?

In what ways does being able to cope with information help you to participate?

Where could you store information that you might want to use later?