



WebQuest Taskonomy: A Taxonomy of Tasks

1. Introduction

The task is the single most important part of a WebQuest. It provides a goal and focus for student energies and it lays the foundation for the curricular intentions of the designer.

2. Definitions

- **Retelling Tasks**

Sometimes all you're asking of students is to absorb some information and then demonstrate that they've understood it. Research reports like these can provide an easy introduction to the use of the Web as an information source.

Students can report on what they've learned by way of presentations, posters, or short reports.

- **Compilation Tasks**

A simple task for students is to take information from a number of sources and put it into a common format. The resulting compilation might be published on the Web, or it might be some tangible non-digital product.

To make a compilation task qualify as a true WebQuest, there needs to be some *transformation* of the information compiled. Simply putting a hotlist of web sites or a collection of web images together arbitrarily isn't enough.

- **Mystery Tasks**

Sometimes a good way to lure your students into a topic is to wrap it in a puzzle or detective story. This works well at the elementary school level, but can also be extended all the way up to adult learners.

A well-designed mystery task requires synthesis of information from a variety of sources. Create a puzzle that cannot be solved simply by finding the answer on a particular page.



- **Journalistic Tasks**

One way to craft a WebQuest is to ask your learners to act like reporters covering a specific event. The task involves gathering facts and organizing them into an account within the usual genres of news and feature writing. In evaluating how they do, accuracy is important and creativity is not.

- **Design Tasks**

Design is "a plan or protocol for carrying out or accomplishing something." A WebQuest design task requires learners to create a product or plan of action that accomplishes a pre-determined goal and works within specified constraints.

The key element in a design task is to build in authentic constraints. In fact, an unconstrained design task teaches an illusory "anything goes" attitude that doesn't map well onto the real world.

- **Creative Product Tasks**

Creative WebQuest tasks lead to the production of something within a given format (e.g. painting, play, skit, poster, game, simulated diary or song) but they are much more open-ended and unpredictable than design tasks. The evaluation criteria for these tasks would emphasize creativity and self-expression, as well as criteria specific to the chosen genre.

As with design tasks, the constraints are the key, and they will differ depending on the creative product and topic being worked on.

- **Consensus Building Tasks**

People disagree because of differences in their value systems, in what they accept as factually correct, in what they've been exposed to, or in what their ultimate goals are. The essence of a consensus-building task is the requirement that differing viewpoints be articulated, considered, and accommodated where possible. For better or worse, current events and recent history provide many opportunities for practice.

- **Persuasion Tasks**

A persuasion task goes beyond a simple retelling by requiring students to develop a convincing case that is based on what they've learned. Persuasion tasks might include presenting at a mock city council hearing or a trial, writing a letter, editorial or press release, or producing a poster or videotaped ad designed to sway opinions.



Persuasion tasks are often combined with consensus building tasks, although not always. The key difference is that with persuasion tasks, students work on convincing an external audience of a particular point of view, as opposed to the persuasion and accommodation that occurs internally in a consensusbuilding task.

- **Self-Knowledge Tasks**

Sometimes the goal of a WebQuest is a greater understanding of oneself, an understanding that can be developed through guided exploration of on- and off-line resources.

A well-crafted self-knowledge task will compel the learner to answer questions about themselves that have no short answers.

- **Analytical Tasks**

One aspect of understanding is the knowledge of how things hang together, and how things within a topic relate to each other. In analytical tasks, learners are asked to look closely at one or more things and to find similarities and differences, to figure out the implications for those similarities and differences. They might look for relationships of cause and effect among variables and be asked to discuss their meaning.

A well-designed analytical task goes beyond simple analysis to the implications of what is found.

- **Judgment Tasks**

Judgment tasks present a number of items to the learner and ask them to rank or rate them, or to make an informed decision among a limited number of choices.

It's common, though not required, that learners play a role while accomplishing a judgment task.

- **Scientific Tasks**

The scientific method lead to the technology that lead to your reading of these words. Science permeates our society and it's critical that today's children understand how science works, even if they never don a white smock and carry a clipboard around.

The Web brings both historical and up-to-the-minute data to our doors, and some of it can provide practice at doing real science.

(Adapted from <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/taskonomy.html>)