



Connect with Kids

WebSource

For the Classroom

College and Career Readiness

Research Strategies: Online Accuracy?

Discussion Questions

- What are the steps you take when researching a topic?
- How do you choose what information to use while researching a topic?
- Many of us complete online research. Why is it important to access the authenticity and accuracy of your resources?

Activity:

Determining Authenticity of a Website

Students will be able to determine authenticity of a website.

MATERIALS

- Computer access

PROCEDURE

1. Explain to the students that in order to help them learn how to determine authenticity of a website they are going to prepare to write a research paper. For this exercise, let's say the task at hand is to research role models in the media. To start, request that each student choose his or her role model.
2. Next, explain to the students that they are going to research their role model using the internet, finding authentic websites that offer valuable information on their role model. To determine whether or not these sites are authentic, they will use the **Is This Site Legitimate?** checklist. See if students can add any additional criteria to this suggested list:
 - Are his/her credentials listed?
 - Is the author qualified to write on the specific topic?
 - Who is the intended audience? Experts or general public?
 - What is the purpose of the site? To teach, persuade or sell?
 - Is the information covered fact, opinion or propaganda?
 - Is the author's point of view objective or impartial?
 - Is the language free of bias?

- Does the content of the page have the official approval from the owners of the topic being covered?
 - Are the sources for factual information clearly listed so that the information can be verified?
 - Is it clear who has the ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of the content of the material?
 - Can you verify any of the information in independent sources or from your own knowledge?
 - Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
 - Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, or typographical errors?
 - Does the information on the site appear to be valid and well-researched or is it unsupported evidence?
 - What institution/company supports the information?
 - Have you heard of the supporting companies?
 - Does the information seem to be up to date?
 - Is there an indication when the site was last updated?
 - Are all the links on the website still active?
 - Do the links appear to be useful to the topic of the site?
3. Dismiss students to computers to begin their research.
 4. As students are searching the web for information on their role models, remind them that they should go through their checklist to make sure the information on each website is authentic. If so, have students write down the website with a few notes, so they can refer back to it.
 5. When time is up, have students share their findings. Did they come across websites that were not authentic? How many? Was it hard to find authentic websites?



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Research Strategies

Determining Authenticity of a Website: Is this Site Legitimate?

Consideration	Yes/No	Notes
Are his/her credentials listed?		
Is the author qualified to write on the specific topic?		
Who is the intended audience? Experts or general public?		
What is the purpose of the site? To teach, persuade or sell?		
Is the information covered fact, opinion or propaganda?		
Is the author's point of view objective or impartial?		
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What institution/company supports the information?		
Have you heard of the supporting companies?		
Does the information seem to be up to date?		
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Are all the links on the website still active?		
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Research Strategies:

10 Tips to Evaluate Website Legitimacy

The Internet contains some extremely valuable, high-quality information sources, along with some very unreliable, biased sources of misinformation. That puts the burden on you as a researcher to evaluate the quality of each website you use, whether it's for a class assignment or personal use.

1.	Look for contact information on the website: a physical address, email support, and, most of all, a phone number. Many scam sites have no contact information. Send an email if there is an address. Ask for more information. A real website will be glad to accommodate you.
2.	Search the Internet for other users who have reported improprieties. Type the website's name into a search engine with another keyword like "scam" or "complaint" for possible forums online where others have posted their experiences.
3.	Look for consistency in design and critique of the flow and "readability" of the website. Ask yourself if images and text are arranged in a way that is easy to follow. Are there grammatical errors? Legitimate websites expend the necessary resources to have copy proofread and edited by professionals.
4.	Look for websites that specialize in the kind of information you're seeking. If you're writing about a new medical treatment, check out medical websites, and so on.
5.	Look for the most up-to-date information available; look for a "last updated" date on the page or site. If a website seems old, it's probably best to steer clear.
6.	Look for an "About" or "More about the Author" link at the top, bottom or side bar of the webpage. Some pages will have a corporate author rather than a single person as an author. If you have the name of the author, you can always Google him or her to check their credentials.
7.	Avoid Anonymous Authors. Articles or studies whose authors are named are often - though not always - more reliable than works produced anonymously.
8.	Check the Links Reputable websites often link to each other. See which sites the website links to.
9.	Check out the suffix on the domain name (the three-letters that come after the dot.) The suffix is usually (but not always) descriptive of what type of entity hosts the website. Examples include: .edu = educational; .com = commercial, .mil = military, .gov = government, .org = nonprofit.
10.	If you are in doubt, ask your instructor or a media center coordinator for assistance.