

**EVALUATING INTERNET SOURCES:
DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ!**



Workshop sponsored by:

**The Dr. Mack Gipson, Jr.,
Tutorial and Enrichment Center**

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COMMON TYPES OF INTERNET SOURCES	
.edu	educational institution (but not necessarily an “official” university site)
.gov	government agency
.org	non-profit organization
.com	company/corporation/mass media/commercial site
.net	private site

KNOW YOUR SITE!		
WHO?	author/source/ authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the author? • What are the author’s qualifications? • How can you contact the author? • Are there links to other websites? Do the links still work? • •
WHAT?	format/structure/ content/accuracy/ coverage/ relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of website is it? • What are the announced and unannounced purposes of the site? • Is there evidence that someone is monitoring or verifying the information? • Is there a bibliography? • Are sources given for citations, statistics, etc.? • Is there any advertising? • Is the information grammatically correct? • Is the site easy to read? • Is there any apparent bias? • •
WHEN?	date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the information written? When was it gathered? • When was the website last updated/revised? • Is the information current? • Is having current information important for your topic? • Are the links current? • •
WHERE?	publisher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the site published? • Who has editorial control over the site? • •
WHY?	purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why does the site exist? • Is the author/site trying to sell you something? • Are there hidden messages or is there a hidden purpose? •

CAUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

<p>1. BEWARE: Websites can be developed by anybody. Only .edu and .gov sites need to provide documentation in order to get the site. Even then, you may not be able to tell who actually wrote the site. (For example, a student may have written a site that has an .edu address but the site may not have been verified or supported by the university.)</p>	<p>2. Good looks are not enough! Make sure the information is reliable.</p>
<p>3. If you find a good, reliable site, make note of its URL address or bookmark it so you can go back to it if needed.</p>	<p>4. Remember that you will need to carefully cite any Internet sources that you use (including ideas, facts, quotations, charts, tables, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • record all of the information needed for your reference page and for all citations in your text • write down the entire URL address of the website and the date you actually saw the material on the Internet so you can properly type your reference entry
<p>5. Evaluate the <u>entire</u> website before you decide to use the information.</p>	<p>6. Keep in mind that sites often change on the Internet, so if you saw the information more than a few weeks ago you should try to get back to that site or page again before you finish your paper to make sure that information is still accessible.</p>
<p>7. Abstracts and summaries (of articles, books, etc.) are not acceptable to use as sources for your research paper. You must read the article or book itself if you want to use it as a source.</p>	<p>8. Make sure you understand any limitations that your instructor has placed on your use of Internet sources. (How many can you use? What types of sites are allowed? etc.)</p>
<p>9. Information you find in e-mail, “chat rooms,” and other types of discussion sites may be a way to share ideas but they are usually not considered acceptable sources for your research paper.</p>	<p>10. Use critical thinking skills to evaluate the value of each site before you use it as a source.</p>
<p>11. Beware of outright or subtle attempts to persuade, censor, or deceive you on a website.</p>	<p>12. Make sure you type the pathnames accurately when you try to access a site <u>and</u> when you type your references.</p>

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SEARCH ENGINES

Search engines are programs that help you search the Internet for specific pieces of information. Search engines can be very helpful. However, it is important that you learn how to use each search engine effectively.

1. Read the **HELP** screens and practice using the search engine before you really need it.
2. Think about your topic before you start searching. Do some pre-reading and come up with a list of keywords that you can use in your search.
3. Type your keywords very carefully when you start a search. Any mistake can make a big difference in your search.
4. Use **advanced searches** whenever possible.
5. Try searching for phrases and use Boolean operators if your search engine allows them.
6. Try entering several keywords or phrases relating to your topic in the same search, if your search engine allows you to do so. If you try this technique, put the most important keyword first.
7. Try several different search engines until you find one that suits your needs.

Boolean Operators (if allowed by search engine)

OPERATOR	PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
AND	all the terms you specify must appear in the document:	literacy AND adult
OR	at least one of the terms you specify must appear in the document	literacy OR reading
NOT	at least one of the terms you specify must <i>not</i> appear in the documents	depression NOT hole

Other Symbols (if allowed by search engine)

SYMBOL	PURPOSE
+	put this sign before a term that <i>must</i> appear in the document
-	put this sign before a term that <i>must not</i> appear in the document
NEAR	the terms you enter should be within a certain number of words of each other
FOLLOWED BY	one term must directly follow the other
ADJ	the terms must be adjacent (next to) each other

SUGGESTED SITES

Take some time to explore each site in order to find out what it can and can not do.

<p><u>General Search Engines</u></p> <p>www.google.com www.yahoo.com www.altavista.com www.about.com</p>	<p><u>Meta Search Engines</u></p> <p>www.hotbot.com www.dogpile.com</p> <p>Note: Meta search engines are programs that search other data bases.</p>
<p><u>General Information</u></p> <p>www.libraryspot.com www.refdesk.com</p>	<p><u>Reference Materials</u></p> <p>www.bartleby.com</p>
<p><u>Search Engines for Newspapers</u></p> <p>http://news.google.com www.thepaperboy.com</p>	<p><u>Science/Medicine</u></p> <p>www.nlm.nih.gov/hinfo.html pubmed.com</p>

NOTES:

- The [nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov) site is the website for the National Library of Medicine at the U. S. National Institutes of Health. This site has many options, including access to **Medline/pubmed** and to a service called **locatorplus** which may be useful in locating information about health and medical issues.
- Different search engine may pull up different articles. Therefore, you might want to use more than one search engine for any particular research project.