

20

Problem Solving

Evaluating Web Sites

Estimated Classroom Time	Topic	Page
20 minutes	Questioning Web Sites	189
10 minutes	Evaluating Bias	189
20 minutes	Evaluating Web Sites for Web Guides	190
5 minutes	Wrapping Up	191
	WORKSHEET: Can You Trust This Web Site?	192
	WORKSHEET: Evaluating Web Sites	193

Prerequisite

- “Getting Started on the Computer” lesson or familiarity with the Windows operating system.
- “Navigating the Web” lesson or familiarity with the Internet and navigating the Web using a Web browser.

Objectives

You will be able to:

- Evaluate Web sites based on criteria and bias.
- Create a list of annotated Web sites for a Web Guide.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Gather Supplies



- You will need a separate sheet of paper to write your answers to the review questions.
- In order to save your work, you will need a floppy or Zip disk.

Photocopy Worksheets and Fact Sheets



Worksheets and fact sheets are designed to be photocopied so that you can refer to them during the lesson, write directly on them, and take them home. If a lesson includes worksheets or fact sheets, you'll find them at the end of the lesson. Check now to see if this lesson includes any. Photocopy them before you start the lesson.

Copy Working Files to a Disk



If a lesson includes an electronic working file, you'll find a printed copy at the end of the lesson to use as a reference. You will work directly in the electronic copy during the lesson. Check now to see if this lesson includes a working file. If it does, copy the electronic working file to a floppy or Zip disk. You can copy the working file from the desktop or download it from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Web site <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/libraries/uslibraryprogram/granteesupport/trainingcurricula/default1.htm>.

To Copy a Working File from the Desktop

1. Insert a floppy or Zip disk into the appropriate disk drive of the computer.
2. Double-click the **Computer Companion** folder on the desktop.
3. Double-click the folder of the lesson you want to use. The files in each lesson folder include the working files that are used with the lesson.
4. Click the working file you want to use.
5. Click **Edit** on the menu bar, and select **Copy**.
6. Click the downward-pointing arrow on the **Address** bar, and select **3½ Floppy** to save to a floppy disk or select **Removable Disk (E:)** to save to a Zip disk.
7. Click **Edit** on the menu bar, and select **Paste**. The file is copied onto the disk.
8. Double-click the file to open and begin using it.

Printing Your Work

You might or might not be able to print from the computer you are working on. Consult a staff member for instructions. None of the lessons require printing.

See the *Printing, Saving, and Opening Files Quick Guide* for more information.

You are free to copy or print any part of this book. Copies may not be sold or used for commercial purposes.

Introduction

Anyone can publish Web sites on the Internet. So how do you know if what you are looking at is a collection of legitimate and updated stock quotes or projections from someone who merely claims to be an expert? It is important to assess the validity of any source of information, including Web sites. When evaluating Web sites, the information should be judged using the following criteria:

- Is the information accurate?
- Is the author of the site considered an authority on the subject matter?
- Is it written objectively?
- How current is the information?
- Is there adequate coverage of the information?

If you have questions or doubts, compare the information to other resources that you know are reputable and accurate.

Questioning Web Sites



WORKSHEET: *Can You Trust This Web Site?*

(Photocopy the worksheet at the end of this lesson. You can write on your copy while you work.)

Instructor Note

Trainees can work individually or in pairs. Have them share their findings with the class.

Double-click the **Internet Explorer** icon  to start the program. Complete the “Can You Trust This Web Site?” worksheet.

Evaluating Bias

Because anyone can publish anything they like on the Web, when considering a Web site, you need to look closely at the source of your information. Can you determine if the following Web sites are valid and unbiased?

- www.theonion.com
- www.cnn.com
- www.drudgereport.com
- www.npr.org

When evaluating bias, you should look at whether or not the information contradicts your previous knowledge, or if the text reads as if the author is trying to sell you something. Keep in mind that when bias is present, it doesn’t necessarily mean that the information is incorrect, but merely that the author wants you to take his or her side in an argument. When you suspect bias, try to find information on the same topic on at least one other Web site. For information that isn’t clearly right or wrong, you need to be the judge of what to believe.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(Use a blank sheet of paper to write down your answers. You can check your answers against those provided at the end of the lesson.)

1. What are the major criteria to look at when evaluating a Web site?
2. Which of the following are good Web evaluation criteria?
 - a. Number of Web sites with similar information.
 - b. Whether information can be confirmed by a trusted source.
 - c. Whether the Web site attempts to obscure its bias.
 - d. The Web site's rank in a list of search engine hits.
 - e. Up-to-date Web links.
 - f. The reputation of the site's author or sponsor.
 - g. If the information is accurate and error-free.
 - h. The quality of the advertising on the site.
 - i. The date of the page's last revision.

Evaluating Web Sites for Web Guides

**WORKSHEET:** *Evaluating Web Sites*

(Photocopy the worksheet at the end of this lesson. You can write on your copy while you work.)

Instructor Note

Consider adapting the activity in the classroom: Brainstorm ideas for Web Guides and write trainees' ideas on a whiteboard or overhead projector, if available. If trainees are having trouble brainstorming topics, choose topics based on the Internet Explorer Favorites folders. Have each trainee create a Web Guide based on the brainstormed topics.

A Web Guide is an annotated collection of Web sites on a specific subject. The following is an annotation from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation *Senior Resources Web Guide*. Please refer to the *Web Guides* for more examples.

National Senior Citizens Law Center (NSCLC)

<http://www.nsclc.org>


The NSCLC is a national advocacy group for low-income senior citizens. As a national support center, NSCLC advocates for seniors through litigation, legislation, agency representation, and assistance from attorneys and paralegals. The Web site includes links and information on topics such as Social Security, Medicare, and nursing home reform.

To Create a Web Guide

Select a topic for your Web Guide. Topics can be related to your town, a hobby, an interest, or any other topic you want to share information on. Answer the questions on the "Evaluating Web Sites" worksheet for each Web site you are considering for your Web Guide.

1. Double-click the **Internet Explorer** icon to start the program, and go to your favorite search engine or directory.
2. Search for your topic of interest, and select a Web site that has relevant information on your chosen topic.



3. Click inside the **Address** bar, and press CTRL + C to copy the Web site address.
4. Click **Minimize** in the upper-right corner of the window to minimize **Internet Explorer**.
5. Double-click the **Microsoft Word** icon  to start the program.
6. Click **Paste**. The hyperlink is copied into the Word document.
7. Write a brief description of the Web site, following the example from the *Senior Resources Web Guide*.
8. Save your Web Guide on a floppy or Zip disk.
9. Repeat Steps 2–8 for as many Web sites as you want to include on your Web Guide.
10. Quit Microsoft Word, and quit Internet Explorer.

REVIEW QUESTION

(Use a blank sheet of paper to write down your answer. You can check your answer against the one provided at the end of the lesson.)

1. What are some criteria to look for when determining the value of a site for a Web Guide?

Wrapping Up

Key Points to Remember

Carefully evaluate all information you find on the Web, using criteria such as authority, accuracy of content, objectivity, currency, and coverage. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

Answers to Review Questions

EVALUATING BIAS

1. The major criteria for evaluating Web sites are accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency, and coverage.
2. b, c, e, f, g, i

EVALUATING WEB SITES FOR WEB GUIDES

1. The Web site should contain accurate information on the subject; the text should be presented clearly; the Web site's content should be well organized; and the required reading level should be appropriate for the audience.

Additional Resources

- Evaluation Criteria
<http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/evalcrit.html>
- Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages
<http://www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/webcrit.html>
- The World Wide Web Virtual Library: Evaluation of Information Sources
<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/~agsmith/evaln/evaln.htm>

Can You Trust This Web Site?

When you have completed the worksheet, return to the “Evaluating Bias” section of the lesson.

**Answer the questions to evaluate at least three of the following Web sites.
Photocopy this page for each site you are evaluating.**

<http://www.gatt.org> <http://www.irs.gov> <http://www.nutritionaltest.com> <http://www.cancer.org>
<http://www.webcom.com/~pinknoiz/coldwar/humantest.html>

ACCURACY

Are sources cited and data backed up by research?

What is the domain: .edu, .com, .org, .gov, .net, or another domain?*

Is the page designed for promotion, advertising, or to report research?

Can you verify any questionable information in a print resource?

AUTHORITY

What are the author’s qualifications for writing on this subject?

Is the Web site’s mission stated clearly?

OBJECTIVITY

Is the information presented without inappropriate or misrepresented bias?

What techniques are used to sway your opinion, if any?

TIMELINESS

When was the site or page last updated?

Are all links up-to-date and active?

COVERAGE

Are the included topics explored in sufficient depth?

Is any important information left out?

* Anyone can register a .com, .org, or .net domain name, whereas you must meet certain criteria to get an .edu or .gov domain name.

Evaluating Web Sites

When you have completed the worksheet, return to the “Evaluating Web Sites for Web Guides” section of the lesson.

Answer the questions for each Web site you are considering for your Web Guide.

1. How will the Web site be useful to visitors? Describe and summarize the content and scope of the Web site.
2. What makes the Web site unique or different from other Web sites on the same topic?
3. Are there any unusual navigation features? If the site has useful information but is difficult to navigate, can you offer any advice to assist visitors in finding information?

