Evaluate Internet Resources

1. Focus

Explain Evaluating Internet Sources

**Say:** Before you write an informational report, you research your topic. You can use books, magazine articles, and the Internet. When you read a book or magazine article, you know who the authors are and you can check their backgrounds. The Internet, however, is an open source. That means that almost anyone can post opinions, thoughts, and information about any topic. You may not know if the source is credible—trustworthy and believable—or not. Today we will practice evaluating Internet sources to tell which ones are credible.

Model Evaluating Internet Sources

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Questions to Ask About Websites

1. What is the website address? Does it end in .edu or .gov?
2. Who is the author? Can I check this person’s background?
3. What is the source of the website? Who’s sponsoring it?
4. Does the content seem believable? Can I cross-check the information in other sources?
5. When was the material written? Is it out of date?

Modeling Text

**Question 1.** **Say:** I know I need to follow a set of criteria to check if a website is credible. The website address is a good place to start. Website addresses that end in .edu or .gov are sites associated with educational institutions and the government and are generally reliable. Addresses that end in .com and .net indicate companies, nonprofits, or other organizations. The people behind these sites may have other agendas, such as trying to sell me something.

**Question 2.** **Say:** Who is the author? Is he or she an expert? I look for a link to the author’s biography or background information.

**Question 3.** **Say:** I check the source of the website itself. Who is sponsoring the page? Is it obvious? If not, why not? Sometimes an organization doesn’t want people to know it’s sponsoring a page because people would be able to recognize the bias in the information.

**Question 4.** **Say:** I look at the content. Does it seem believable? Can I cross-check the information to verify it? Is the spelling and grammar correct?
Question 5. Say: I check when the article was written. Older material isn’t necessarily wrong, but if I’m researching a topic that changes often, I’ll want something more up-to-date.

Display or distribute copies of a page from www.nasa.gov. Model determining the credibility of the site by using the questions from the modeling text. Read each question and check the page for the answer. Say: This site meets the criteria of a credible site. Its address ends in .gov, the authors are experts, and the sponsor is the national space agency. I see that the material is up-to-date and can be cross-checked with other credible sources. I can trust this site for information about space exploration and technology.

2. Rehearse

Practice Evaluating Internet Sources

Invite students to work in small groups to look at the websites you have reviewed and selected in advance of the lesson. Have students apply the questions from the modeling text to evaluate the sites’ credibility. You may select a less reliable website for students to evaluate, but be sure to thoroughly review the site to make sure the content and links are appropriate.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students together and invite volunteers to share whether they thought the websites were reliable and how they knew this.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Today we learned about using the Internet to research. We learned how to tell the difference between credible and noncredible sources. We learned to follow criteria, such as checking on the author’s background, looking critically at the content, and noting the website address. Following this criteria will help you as you research your informational reports online.

Encourage students to apply the strategy as they do their research during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite students to share websites they found that they think are credible and to tell why.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

ELs may not be able to contribute many ideas orally. You will want to work with them individually to help them analyze websites while other students write independently.

Intermediate

Pair ELs with more fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Write the following sentence frames on chart paper and model how students can use them to contribute ideas:

The website address ______.
The author of the website is ______.
The sponsor is ______.
The content ______.

Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.