

## Evaluating Online Information

### Life Skills:

- Thinking & Reasoning
- Communication

### Time Frame:

1 class period that runs 45 minutes.

### Summary:

Students will understand how to access and evaluate health information that is available on the Internet.

### Main Curriculum Tie:

Library Media/Information Literacy (7-12)  
Extract information.

### Materials:

- [Evaluating Online Health PowerPoint](#) (ppt)
- [Web site Evaluation Form](#) - Student handout (Word)

### Background For Teachers:

#### Web Sites

- [Pioneer Online Library](#)  
EBSCO has several medical related databases, including Health Source – Consumer Edition and MEDLINE. Students can also use SIRS Knowledge Source to find medical information.  
(Note: Pioneer Online Library is only available to Utah students and educators.)
- [MEDLINE](#)  
Good recourse for evaluating health information.
- [20 MOST POPULAR HEALTH WEBSITES](#)  
Answers question " Where do we get our online health information"
- [National Library of Medicine](#)  
This is a video presentation that looks like a PowerPoint. It runs automatically in a browser in a FLASH format. Great information, about 16 min long
- [New York Online Access to Health](#)  
Good recourse for evaluating health information.

### Student Prior Knowledge:

Students should be able to conduct Internet searches.

### Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Students will understand how to assess health information from Internet Web sites.
- Students will analyze common ways fraudulent health products and ideas are marketed on line.
- Students will evaluate a web site and classify it as reliable, questionable, or unreliable.

### **Instructional Procedures:**

1. Show class the [Evaluating Online Health information](#) PowerPoint presentation. Note: If you do not have access to PowerPoint, use the [PDF version of the Presentation](#) to cover the same information.
2. Introduce the [Evaluation Checklist for Health Websites handout](#). Explain how this handout can be used to evaluate a health related web site.
3. Have students go online to evaluate a web site. Allow them to “Google” an approved topic and select a website that covers with this issue. The evaluation handout asks students to evaluate the web site and rate it as Reliable, Questionable, or Unreliable.

### **Possible Medical topics:**

- Weight Loss
- Arthritis Relief
- Cancer Treatment
- Aging
- Pain Relief
- Swine Flu
- Diet Aides
- Acne
- Other topics approved by the instructor

### **Attachments**

- [Evaluating\\_online\\_health\\_info.ppt](#)  
Introductory PowerPoint
- [Evaluating\\_online\\_health\\_info.pdf](#)  
Alternative PowerPoint Information handout
- [SiteReviewForm.doc](#)  
Site Review Form

### **Assessment Plan:**

After students evaluate a web site process the experience as a class. Some sample

processing questions might be:

- Who would like to share your experience on a RELIABLE web page?
- Who visited an UNRELIABLE web page?
- What factors made it UNRELIABLE?
- Was there a web page that you could not decide as to its reliability? Do you think it trying to appear reliable? How Might you better decide?

Do you believe you are now better able to assess the accuracy and reliability of health related online information?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

**CRITICAL EVALUATION OF AN ONLINE HEALTH WEB SITE**

**Authority – Accuracy – Objectivity – Currency - Coverage**

Site #1 \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] Reliable [ ] Questionable [ ] Unreliable.

Site #2 \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] Reliable [ ] Questionable [ ] Unreliable.

Site #3 \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] Reliable [ ] Questionable [ ] Unreliable.

When you are done, circle the site that you think would be the most reliable:      Site #1      Site #2      Site #3

<b>EVALUATE THIS WEBSITE:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>As you look at the questions below, put an X in the yes or no column for each.</b>						
Does the title of the page tell you what it is about?						
Does it contain accurate and useful information?						
Look at the domain name. Can you tell if it's a company, educational institution, organization, government site, or personal website? Which one is it?						
Does it identify the author of the website? If so, who is it?						
Do they ask for personal information?						
Is there an e-mail link to the author or organization?						
Can you tell which organization is sponsoring the website?						
Does the site includes a current copyright/creation date OR a recent revision date?						
Is there an image map allowing you to navigate to other pages of the website and the home page?						
Are there links to related websites that might be helpful?						
Do you feel the organization sponsoring the website might be biased in any way?						
Is there anything on the page or website that indicates a product or service is being sold?						
Is the purpose of the page entertainment, news, reference, business, or personal? (Circle your answer.)						
Do you think the information contained on this website is true and valid?						

## Evaluating Online Health Information



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Using the internet to find health information is alike going on a treasure hunt...



You could find some real gems... or you could find yourself in some strange and dangerous places...

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## The Problem

- 61% of Americans seek out health advice online.
- 34% of those surveyed admitted they changed their thinking about a health topic based on what they found online.
- A growing body of evidence suggests that much online health information is unreliable.
- Wikipedia is in the top ten results found in most online medical searches.

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## Guidelines for Evaluating Online Health Information

- # Authority
- # Accuracy
- # Objectivity
- # Currency
- # Coverage

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## Authority

- # Authority
  - Is there an author or sponsoring organization?
  - What are their qualifications? Are they well-known and reputable?
  - Is there a link to information about the author or sponsor?
  - Is there a way of verifying the legitimacy of the page's sponsor? That is, is there a phone number or address to contact for more information?
  - What is the website's extension?
    - .com - a for profit company
    - .edu - an educational institution
    - .org - a non-profit organization
    - .gov - a governmental agency
    - .html (look for personal name, ~ or %)

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## Accuracy

- # Accuracy
  - Is the information reliable and error-free, including grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors?
  - Is there an editor or someone who verifies the information?
  - Is there a bibliography or other resource links clearly listed so the information can be verified in another source?
  - Does the information contradict information already gathered?

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## Objectivity

- # Objectivity
  - # Purpose
    - What is the purpose/objective of the website?
      - Public service
      - Educational
      - Sway opinion
  - # Advertising
    - Is the information free of advertising?
    - If there is any advertising on the page, is it clearly differentiated from the informational content?
  - # Bias
    - Is the point of view balanced?
    - Is the information based on fact? Opinion? Prejudice?
    - Are both sides of an issue presented?

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## Currency

- # Currency
  - Is the page dated?
  - If so, when was the last update?
  - Have the links been kept current?

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## Coverage

- # Coverage
  - # Relevant
    - Is the content relevant to my topic?
  - # Comprehensive
    - Does the source tell the whole story, or is it too specific about one part?
  - # Compare
    - How does the website compare in content to similar sites?
    - What does this page offer that is not found elsewhere?
    - Does the information contradict other information you have found?

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## Challenges Presented by Online Health Resources

# Challenges

- Web sites blend entertainment, information, and advertising.
- Some Web sites are susceptible to alteration - Wikipedia.
- Does the advertising and information both come from the same person / organization.
- Try to document source to the fullest extent possible
- Attempt to verify information using other sources
- Technology is outpacing ability to create standards and guidelines
- Caveat emptor – Let the buyer beware....

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