Idea Book for Evaluating Web Information

Sample assignments and criteria for elementary, middle, high school and college

MoSHI
Mobile School Health Information Initiative

BECKER
Medical Library

Winter 2010
Suspect Language in Health & Medical News
Beware of health and medical news and web sites with the following words:

- Cure
- Miracle
- Breakthrough
- Promising
- Dramatic
- Hope
- Victim

Also, the Federal Trade Commission encourages the public to think about the following when searching for health products:

- Statements that the product is a quick and effective cure-all or diagnostic tool for a wide variety of ailments. For example: "Extremely beneficial in the treatment of rheumatism, arthritis, infections, prostate problems, ulcers, cancer, heart trouble, hardening of the arteries and more."
- Statements that suggest the product can treat or cure diseases. For example: "shrinks tumors" or "cures impotency."
- Promotions that use words like "scientific breakthrough," "miraculous cure," "exclusive product," "secret ingredient" or "ancient remedy." For example: "A revolutionary innovation formulated by using proven principles of natural health-based medical science."
- Text that uses impressive-sounding terms like these for a weight-loss product: "hunger stimulation point" and "thermogenesis."
- Undocumented case histories or personal testimonials by consumers or doctors claiming amazing results. For example: "My husband has Alzheimer's disease. He began eating a teaspoonful of this product each day. And now in just 22 days he mowed the grass, cleaned out the garage, weeded the flower beds and we take our morning walk again."
- Limited availability and advance payment requirements. For example: "Hurry. This offer will not last. Send us a check now to reserve your supply."
- Promises of no-risk "money-back guarantees." For example: "If after 30 days you have not lost at least 4 pounds each week, your uncashed check will be returned to you."

Sources:
http://www.healthnewsreview.org/tips-for-understanding-studies.php
http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/health/hea07.shtm
Website Wisdom

Senior Professor Ann Rogers
DeVry / Irving Campus

Assignment Guidelines

- Major points will be deducted for late presentations.
- No shows will receive a zero for this assignment.
- Presentations will not be allowed after classtime, Week 7.

- Evaluation/Reliability of sources:
  Penguin, Part 4 Designing and Presenting
  Penguin, Chapter 18: Find and Evaluate Sources on the Web
  Reid, pp. 633 – 642

WEBSITE CHOICES

- Using the criteria worksheet, choose one from each of the 4 websites from the listed URLs to evaluate.
- Honors students will choose 8 (2 from each) websites to evaluate.
- Choices include the following:
  .gov
  .org
  .net
  .com

- Use common sense when choosing sites—no pornography, “how to make a bomb”, terrorists’, etc.

Please DO NOT use gaming sites (or any site connected with gaming), common user sites like “Google” or “Ask.com” or examples like “myspace.com,” “YouTube,” “eBay,” online dictionary or encyclopedia sites like “Wikipedia,” common news sites like “CNN” or FoxNews,” virtual life sites, or college/university .edu sites.

These will not be counted for presentation or write-ups. If you are in doubt about a choice, please see me.
WRITE-UP GUIDELINES

- Word process the 4 worksheets (8 for honors students) using the attached Website Evaluation Website Worksheet format.
- Note: Extra copies are found under Doc Sharing.
- Avoid the use of “you” or “your” in all parts of your write-ups.
- Complete sentences are ONLY required when writing the website conclusion. Use bullet statement phrases for all other parts of this assignment.
- In addition, print off ONLY the front page of each website.
- Staple each webpage to the worksheet, include all 4 (or 8) in a pocket folder and place them in the red basket for grading.
- Submit assignment folder after you present.

PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

- Present two websites to the class. Each one should be 3 - 5 minutes long. Total time: 6 – 10 minutes
  Note: Please vary the subject of your two websites and choose two different URLs. For example, present one .net and one .org site.
- Use the podium computer to display each of your two chosen websites and use them as visual aids.
- Write or speak the web address of each site to enable classmates to view it on their computer screens.
- Use the Website Evaluation Assignment Criteria as a guide to inform your audience about your websites.
- Prepare your presentation carefully, remember to ask for and answer questions, and choose websites that will engage you and your audience.
- Reply to inquiries about this website evaluation assignment on the designated Threaded Discussion—Week 7.

GRADING CRITERIA

- Students will grade the presentations of other students.
- The instructor will grade the write-ups.
• **Grading Criteria**
  
  _____ Classmates' Evaluation Grade = 50%
  _____ Evaluation Worksheet Grade = 50%

**Deductions**

_____ 5 pts. for missing folder
_____ 5 pts. for each missing website page (front page only, please)
_____ 5 pts. for each handwritten evaluation
_____ 5 pts. for each format/wording error
_____ 10 points for late presentation
_____ TOTAL SCORE

• Evaluation forms will be handed out on the presentation days.

• Tabulated evaluations will be available Week 8—after your final essay exam.

• Please grade your peer's website presentations carefully and honestly! Depending on each category’s delivery and information, most evaluation grades will vary.

• Students who do not participate in the evaluation process will lose points on their own presentation.
Speaker's Name ________________________________ Your Initials ______

Topic # 1 ________________________________

Please mark your grade for this presentation below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation Good Points

Areas to Improve

________________________________________________________________

Topic # 2 ________________________________

Please mark your grade for this presentation below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation Good Points

Areas to Improve
WEBSITE EVALUATION WORKSHEET

- These must be word processed.
- Use bullet statements in most parts.

Your Name:

Website Address:

Website Purpose/Content/Coverage:

Accessibility and Appearances:

Accuracy / Authority:

Objectivity / Bias:

Currency (Latest date listed):

Documentation / Sources / Associated Links:

WEBSITE SUMMARY

Positive points about the site

Negative points about the site

Conclusion
This must be written in complete sentences and should be approximately ½ page, double spaced.
WEBSITE EVALUATION ASSIGNMENT CRITERIA

Website Purpose/Content / Coverage:

- Why is this website included on the web? To inform? Persuade? Convince? Sell?
- Does the site look at a topic in depth? In breadth?

Accessibility and Appearances

- Does the page load quickly?
- Does the site appear to be user-friendly and easy to read (prose written in “text bites” or long passages)?
- Is the site easy to navigate?
- Concerning graphics:
  - Do the graphics slow it down?
  - Are they appealing?
  - Do they enhance the site?
  - If pop-up graphics/text appear, do they detract from the website purpose?
- Is the site free or fee based?

Accuracy / Authority

- Who sponsors the site?
- Can you determine if the sponsor is legitimate?
  Note: Some sites are very clever and appear to be legitimate, so use discretion when evaluating the site(s).
- Is the site anonymous?
- How is site information verified?
- Is reliable contact information included?
- Will the site’s information “stand up” when compared/checked against other sources?
- How reputable is the domain or publisher?
- Check the URL domain: .gov and .org are often more likely than .com sites to come from authoritative sources.

Objectivity / Bias

- Is there evidence of potential bias—does the site represent a slanted point of view? Is this acknowledged?
- Does the site appear to disperse information—either unbiased or from more than one point of view?
- Does the site reflect a specific agenda or point of view?
- What motivations are present?
- What audience is the site trying to reach?
- Is the site a “mask” for advertising?

Currency

- Are dates listed on site information (including articles, etc.)?
- Last date of site revision?
- Is it maintained and updated regularly?

Documentation

- Are sources listed?
- Are links to other sites provided?
- If so, what is the purpose of these sites and are they credible?
- Are dead links still attached to the site?
# Online Health Information Scorecard

**Web site to evaluate:**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consider the Source</th>
<th>Questions to Consider</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 Site is sponsored by a respected, reliable, and unbiased source. | ✓ Who is the source? Is it a...  
  - Government agency (gov)  
  - University or academic institution (edu)  
  - Non-profit or professional organization (.org)  
  - Commercial organization (.com)  
  ✓ Is it a source you recognize?  
  ✓ What is the site's main purpose?  
  - Main focus should not be to sell products or give slanted opinions. (Advertisements should be clearly labeled as "Advertisement" or "From our Sponsor") | 1 point if government, edu or org  
  0 points if .com | 1 point if "Yes"  
  0 points if "No" | |
| 2 Writers are qualified in a relevant field. | ✓ Is it clear who is providing the health information?  
  (Is an author named?)  
  ✓ Is the author a health care professional with credentials? For example, a...  
  - Physician (MD)  
  - Registered dietitian (RD)  
  - Registered nurse (RN)  
  - Nurse practitioner (ARNP)  
  ✓ If the author is a journalist or other lay person (not a health care professional), do they refer to a health professional with the proper credentials? | 1 point if "Yes"  
  0 points if "No" | 1 point if "Yes"  
  0 points if "No" or if no author is listed | |
| 3 Contact information provides ties to a responsible person. | ✓ Is there a name, title, e-mail address and phone number given for a contact person?  
  ✓ Should be someone other than the Webmaster. | 1 point if "Yes"  
  0 points if "No" | |
| Look for the Evidence | Information is unbiased. | ✓ Does the site provide fair and balanced information (including controversial issues and alternatives)?  
  ✓ Does it avoid opinions and testimonials? | 1 point if "Yes"  
  0 points if "No" | |

Connecting Youth to Quality Health Information

Scorecard, page 1 of 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Information is accurate.</th>
<th>Site has been reviewed and approved by professionals.</th>
<th>Information is up-to-date.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>✓ Is the coverage of topics helpful? Are typical questions answered?</td>
<td>✓ Are health claims and benefits supported with references to medical research?</td>
<td>✓ Are pages and documents dated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Does the site avoid false or misleading information?</td>
<td>✓ Are the seals of approval reputable and relevant?</td>
<td>✓ Is &quot;current research&quot; dated within the past year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.</td>
<td>o An award for Web site design does not make the health information credible.</td>
<td>o There are always new advancements in medical and nutrition science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 point if &quot;Yes&quot;</td>
<td>1 point if &quot;Yes&quot;</td>
<td>1 point if &quot;Yes&quot; or if this does not apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 points if &quot;No&quot;</td>
<td>0 points if &quot;No&quot;</td>
<td>0 points if &quot;No&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Protect Yourself**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Site has sufficient privacy protection.</th>
<th>Site encourages you to get a second opinion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>✓ Does the site require you to register, enter your e-mail address, or answer personal questions before you can view health information?</td>
<td>✓ Does the site warn you against using online medical advice to replace visits with a health care professional?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Notice what types of questions you answer—personal information may be sold or shared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ If personal information is collected, does the site have privacy policies that clearly state how the information will be used?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 point if &quot;Yes&quot; or if this does not apply</td>
<td>1 point if &quot;Yes&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 points if &quot;No&quot;</td>
<td>0 points if &quot;No&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Web site address: ____________________________

Total Score (out of 20 possible points): ________

Connecting Youth to Quality Health Information

Scorecard, page 2 of 2
Part I: Evaluating Online Health Information

1. Which two Web sites have you been assigned to evaluate?
   1. ________________________________________________
   2. ________________________________________________

2. Using the Online Health Information Scorecard...
   a. For each site, go through all nine Criteria and answer every Question to Consider.
   b. Provide a brief comment for each question to justify your answer.
   c. Score each answer according to the Scoring Criteria.
   d. Calculate a total score for each site.

   NOTE: You need to complete two Scorecards, one for each Web site.

3. Which of the two sites are you more likely to recommend to a friend or family member?
   (Which one received the higher score?)
   ________________________________________________

4. List three traits about the higher scoring site that indicates it is providing higher quality information?
   1. ________________________________________________
   2. ________________________________________________
   3. ________________________________________________

5. List three traits about the lower scoring site that indicates the information may not be reliable or trustworthy.
   1. ________________________________________________
   2. ________________________________________________
   3. ________________________________________________
6. Is there anything about the *higher scoring* site that makes you question its credibility? Please describe.


Part II: Searching MedlinePlus

1. Interview a friend or family member (or you can interview yourself). Ask: “What is one thing you would like to know about nutrition?” Write that question below:


2. Go to medlineplus.gov and see if you can find the answer.
   a. Where did you go first to look for the answer?
      - [ ] Health Topics
      - [ ] Drugs & Supplements
      - [ ] Videos & Cool Tools
      - [ ] Search Bar
      - [ ] Other

   b. Where did you go next?


3. What was the answer you found?


4. Where did you find it? Write down the exact Web address:


5. Was it easy or difficult to find what you were looking for? Did you have to search more than one way? What made it easy or difficult?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________


6. How did you know if the information you found was credible?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

7. Would you use MedlinePlus again to search for health and nutrition information? Why or why not?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Middle School

Grades 6 to 8 • Personal Health Series
Media Literacy and Health

Technology has made it so easy for people to get health-related information. But not all of the information is accurate. The following discussion questions and activities will help your students learn to evaluate health-related information so they can make healthy choices in their lives.

Related KidsHealth Links

Articles for Kids:

What Kids Say About: Their Health
KidsHealth.org/kid/young/children/poll_health_literacy.html

Safe Cyberspace Surfing
KidsHealth.org/kid/watch/tvinternet/Internet_Safety.html

Going to the Doctor
KidsHealth.org/kid/feel_better/people/going_to_dr.html

Articles for Teens:

Figuring Out Health News
KidsHealth.org/teen/safety/healthNews/healthNews.html

Internet Safety: Safe Surfing Tips for Teens
KidsHealth.org/teen/safety/Internet_safety.html

Talking to Your Doctor
KidsHealth.org/teen/your_body/medical_care/talk_doctor.html

Discussion Questions

Note: The following questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

1. When you want to get information about your health, where do you go? What are the most reliable sources of information about health-related issues? What makes a source reliable or unreliable?

2. What influences the choices you make about your health — the way you eat, exercise, and how you take care of yourself? Make a list of those influences and rate how much they affect you.

3. How does advertising online, on TV, and in magazines and newspapers, etc., affect the health choices you make in life? (Think about food, medicine, fitness, health care products, tobacco, etc.) How do advertisements try to get you to eat a certain food or to live a certain way?
Activities for Students

Note: The following activities are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

Exploring the Surf

Objectives:
Students will:
• Learn to evaluate Internet sites
• Analyze a variety of health-related websites for credibility

Materials:
• Exploring the Surf handout [available at: KidsHealth.org/personal/growing/health_media_literacy_handout1.pdf]
• Computer with Internet access
• Pencil or pen

Class Time:
2 hours

Activity:
Information about your health is everywhere you turn — on TV, on websites, in magazines and newspapers, on billboards and in school. Many people turn to the Internet with health-related questions. Unfortunately, not all information on the Internet is accurate. So how do you determine which websites are reliable? How do you know who to trust? Read the articles at KidsHealth to gain a better understanding about reliable information and credible sources. Next, use the Exploring the Surf handout to analyze five health-related websites. Once you’ve evaluated the websites, reflect upon your findings. What surprised you about the websites you examined? Will your findings affect how you use the Internet to look for information in the future?

Extensions:
1. Your doctor, the nurse at school, and your health teachers are reliable sources of health-related information, but you might feel embarrassed to talk to them about certain topics. With a partner, role-play a conversation you might have with your doctor about an issue that concerns you.

2. Find an article in a newspaper or magazine that addresses a health-related issue. Based on what you’ve read at KidsHealth, do you think the article is reliable? Write a brief paragraph explaining your opinion.

Reproducible Materials

Handout: Exploring the Surf
KidsHealth.org/classroom/6to8/personal/growing/health_media_literacy_health_handout1.pdf
For elementary grades
From [http://www.memorialel.mersd.org/Pages/meme_library/WebEval](http://www.memorialel.mersd.org/Pages/meme_library/WebEval)

Student Name:

**Be a Web Detective Worksheet**

**Topic:**
**Search Engine:**
**URL:**
1. **Author** - Who is the author? What are his/her qualifications?

2. **Bias** – Is the information reliable? Is it objective? Is the information trying to sway you? Do the links reflect a bias?

3. **Content** – Is the information relevant to your topic? Does it answer your questions?

4. **Dates** – When was the website last updated? Is the information current?

5. **Editor** – Who sponsors the site? Is the organization reputable or legitimate? Is it a commercial institution?