

The World Wide Web has literally put the world at our fingertips. However, that technology has also given anyone and everyone the opportunity to become a writer and publisher. To use the Web successfully for school or for fun you need to learn how to evaluate any site you visit.

### HERE'S HOW

**Strategy 1: Confirm the source.** Anyone with an Internet connection can publish a Web site. Ask yourself:

- Who is the author or publisher? What credentials does the author have? If the author isn't identified or credentials aren't provided, the information may be unreliable.
- Is the site created or sponsored by a reputable organization, business, or individual? Individuals may be passionate about their subjects, but they are not necessarily experts.

**Strategy 2: Determine the purpose.** Sites are published for many reasons—to persuade, entertain, inform, or advertise. Ask yourself:

- Why has this site been created? Although an organization's site may inform you about a topic, it may also have another purpose—to persuade users to support its point of view. Business sites offer information, yet their goal is often to sell their products.
- Is the information objective or biased? Sites often present only one point of view or opinion, which could mean you're not receiving reliable information.

**Strategy 3: Examine the content.** The information on the Web doesn't always pass through editors or fact-checkers. You need to determine the value of the site's content. Ask yourself:

- Does the site cover the topic thoroughly? Does it reference or link to in-depth resources?
- Is the information on the site well written? Are there misspellings or grammatical errors? Poorly written sites could signal unreliable content.
- Does the site provide a Works Cited page or a bibliography? Can I verify that the sources the author consulted are reliable, thorough, and objective?
- Do multimedia elements help explain or clarify the site's content and subject?
- When was the site created? Locate the date, or frequency with which the site is updated, to determine how current the information is.

**Strategy 4: Judge the presentation and navigation.** A site may have excellent and relevant information, but if it is poorly designed, you may not be able to access that content. Information is only valuable if you can get to it. Ask yourself:

- Is the site well organized, well designed, and easy to navigate? Is the text easy to read?
- Are multimedia elements used sparingly and for a specific purpose? Are they distracting?
- Does the site take a long time to load? Are links still current?

LESSON  
**18**

PRACTICE WORKSHEET A  
**Evaluating Web Sites**

COPYMASTER

**Directions:** Use the following questions to evaluate the Web site shown.

The screenshot shows the Sierra Club website at the URL <http://www.sierraclub.org/energy>. The page has a dark header with the Sierra Club logo and navigation options like 'environmental update', 'my backyard', and 'my chapter'. Below the header is a navigation bar with 'Smart Energy Solutions' highlighted. The main content area features a section titled 'A Time for Action' with a sub-heading 'In the News' and a large image of Earth. The text discusses global warming and the need for clean energy solutions. A sidebar on the right contains a search bar and a list of links such as 'take action', 'get outdoors', and 'join or give'. At the bottom of the sidebar is a 'Join the Sierra Club' button.

- Who is the author of this site? Is the author an individual, an organization, or a business? How do you know? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Notice some of the links available on this page. Judging from the links, do you think this site offers a thorough treatment of how people can implement energy solutions and curb global warming? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Consider your answers to the previous two questions, and note the navigational tools and design of this Web site. In your opinion, is this a quality Web site? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**18****Evaluating Web Sites**

**Directions:** There will be reliable and unreliable Web sites about almost any topic. Choose one of the topics below, then find one high-quality site and one low-quality site about your topic. Write your topic in the table below. Use the table to compare and contrast the sites.

Topics:

- Global warming
- Ancient Greece
- Nutrition
- Volunteering
- Animal rights

Your Topic:		
Element of Site	High-Quality Site	Low-Quality Site
<b>1. Title and URL</b>		
<b>2. Source</b>		
<b>3. Purpose</b>		
<b>4. Information</b>		
<b>5. Design and Navigation</b>		