

Evaluating Electronic Sources

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Internet: a vast network of computer networks used to communicate and distribute information

World Wide Web (www): accessed through the Internet, a source of information on particular topics and of links to related topics and resources

search engine: a database of Web sites that can be searched for information sources

search term or keyword: a word or phrase related to a particular topic, to be used in electronic searching for information about the topic

URL or domain name: Internet address of a Web site or Web page; an abbreviation for “Uniform Resource Locator.” Once a domain name is registered with an Internet host, it belongs to the individual or organization who registered it.

HERE’S HOW

Step 1: State a writing idea; enter keywords in a search engine. Write your topic as a focused statement or question. Then create a brief phrase as a **key word** or **search term**. Enter it in a database or search engine.

Step 2: Read descriptions or summaries. Your search results should list each source it finds, identifying some information about each site or link.

Step 3: Identify the type of site and its author. For Internet sources, look at a domain name’s suffix to determine the category of the source.

Domain Suffix	Abbreviation for / Category of Source
.com	for “commercial business”
.edu	for “educational institution”
.gov	for “government agencies”
.org	mainly for nonprofit “organizations”
.net	for “network”; often used by groups that don’t fit other categories

STUDENT LESSON SUMMARY, CONTINUED

Step 4: Read or skim the home page or first screen. Check to see how it fits your topic and how objective it is. Visit the most promising sources. A home page should give a clear idea of information within a site.

Step 5: Check the dates. Check a Web site's creation and its most recent update. Look for a copyright date, which tells when material was created. Always look for the date when a site was most recently updated. For current research topics, use recently updated sources.

Step 6: Cross-check accuracy. There is no guarantee of truth in any information you find on the Internet. If you use a source not connected with a well known organization, double-check a few of its facts with reliable sources such as government or university sites or an encyclopedia.