

Using the Internet as a Research Tool

For fun and games and pretty pictures, the Web is fine.

But is the Web a good research tool?

The answer is yes, but if only if you are careful.



Sometimes, it takes special skills just to find something on the Web. To use the Web well, however, you need to do even more. Here are **six** suggestions to consider when examining Web pages*:

Make sure you are in the right place.

Does this site address the topic you are researching? Was the page worth visiting?

When in doubt, doubt.

Do you have good reason to believe that the information on the site is accurate?

Do authors provide any supportive evidence for their conclusions?

Consider the source.

Who are the authors of the Web page? What gives them their authority or expertise to write? Who is responsible for the site? Is this a commercial, governmental, personal, or academic Web site?

Know what's happening.

What is the purpose of the site? Is the main purpose to inform, to persuade, or to sell you something? Do you understand what is being said? What do you think has not been said that should be addressed?

Look at details.

Is the site well organized? Are there misspelled words or examples of poor grammar? Do the links work? Do they send you beyond the site to other reliable sources of information? Does the site offer anything unique or does it tell you little more than you could find in an encyclopedia? Are the graphics on the page clear and helpful or distracting and confusing?

Distinguish Web pages from pages found on the Web.

Do you think this page was designed for the Web, or do you think it was originally something else? If it was originally something else, what something else was it?

REMEMBER: ALWAYS DOUBLE-CHECK EVERYTHING!!!

* <http://www.ithaca.edu/library/training/think.html>; 26 Oct. 2005