

Finding Trustworthy Sources

Can you trust what you read on the internet?

TEACHER GUIDE

AUDIENCE

Grades 4-5

TIME

60 minutes

STANDARDS

Social Studies

- Grade 4: C.S. 2, C.S. 4, C.S. 5
- Grade 5: C.S. 2

English Language Arts

- Grades 3-5: RL.4.1, RL.5.1, RL.4.7, RL.5.7, SL.4.1, SL.5.1, RI.4.1, RI.5.1, RI. 4.3, RI.5.3, RI.4.6, RI.5.6

Social and Emotional

- C1. 1.b, C3 1.b, D1. 1.b, E1. 1.b, E4. 1.b.

Introduction

In this lesson plan, students will experience first-hand why they can't believe everything they find on the internet. They will also learn questions to ask themselves when deciding whether a website contains trustworthy information or not. Students apply this knowledge in evaluating websites related to topics they may have learned about in class. Practicing these skills will assist students in finding reliable sources when doing historical research, whether it is for a class assignment or an Ohio Youth History Day project. This will also help develop their information literacy skills and make them better-informed citizens in everyday life.

Learning Objectives

- Students will understand that not every website on the internet provides information that is accurate or unbiased.
- Students will know some of the reasons why someone might post false or misleading information on the internet.
- Students will be able to make an informed decision as to whether or not the information contained in a website is trustworthy, using several different indicators.

Materials

- Teacher guide
- *All about Explorers* Website: <https://www.allaboutexplorers.com/>
- *ancient-rome.com* Website: <https://gracetennant.wordpress.com/>
- Website Trustworthiness Checklist

Vocabulary

URL	The address of a webpage
Trustworthy	Can be relied on to be accurate and truthful
Bias	A prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person or group, usually in a way considered to be unfair
Digital Literacy	The ability to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information through digital platforms

Program Outline

Pre Activity 1: All about Explorers

- I. Announce to your class that you will be doing an activity where they'll learn about famous explorers. Depending on class size and access to internet devices, this can be done individually or in groups of 2-4. Have the students go to the website *All about Explorers* (<https://www.allaboutexplorers.com/>). Students will then have 10 minutes to choose an explorer and write 3-4 sentences about that explorer answering the following questions:
 - When and where was this explorer born?
 - What are they famous for?
 - What is another interesting fact about this explorer?
- II. Students may start to question some of the information on the site as they do the activity. Simply ask them to answer the questions as best they can by using this website as their source. Once ten minutes has passed, discuss as a class what students found out about their chosen explorers. Ask if anything they read seemed odd or untrue to them. Some examples may be:
 - Christopher Columbus was not born in 1951 in Sydney Australia.
 - Lewis and Clark did not read *National Geographic*, nor did they form a rock band.
 - Ferdinand Magellan did not sail west through the Panama Canal.
- III. Explain that *All about Explorers* is a website created by teachers to show that you can't always trust information you find on the internet.

Discussion: Can you Trust what you Read on the Internet?

- A. Ask your students if they can trust everything they find on the internet. Why or why not?
 - Anyone can post on the internet, whether they are an expert or not.
 - Information can travel rapidly on the internet. Something might be posted, shared and read millions of times without being fact-checked.
- B. *All about Explorers* was purposefully made with the wrong information to educate people. What are some other reasons someone might post false or misleading information?
 - They person is misinformed themselves and are simply passing on the information without checking if it's true.
 - The person wants you to feel a certain way about an issue or change your opinion about something.
 - They are trying to sell you something.
 - They are trolling, or purposefully trying to get an offended or outraged reaction as a prank.



C. What are some things you can look for to tell if you can trust the information on a website?

- **Who wrote it?** Anyone can post information on the internet. Is there a way to tell who wrote the article or webpage? If there is, can you tell something about that person that lets you know they would be able to give good information? Are they an expert on the topic in any way? Is there a way to contact the author or creator of the website to ask questions?
- **When was this made?** Are there dates on the articles and posts in the website? Does the website tell you when the information has last been updated? Has it been updated in the last 6 months? This lets you know if the information on the website is being kept up-to-date and relevant.
- **Where does the information come from?** Look for who published the website. Is it a place you trust? Look at the URL. Websites that end in '.gov' or '.edu' come from either a government or educational organization, and are usually the most trustworthy. Also check if the website has cited the sources where they got their information from.
- **Why was this site made?** Is the webpage trying to sell you something, or does it include a lot of ads? Is the webpage trying to make you feel strongly about something? Is it trying to change your opinion? This is sometimes hard to tell, so make sure you read carefully!
- **Does the website look professional?** Are there many spelling or grammar mistakes on the website? Are there broken links or graphics that don't work correctly? If the creator of the website was not careful about these things, they may have not been careful about the information they post either.

Explain to students that there isn't one thing that tells you if a source is trustworthy or not, but a combination of the factors above. Many of these same question can also be applied to other sources like books, newspapers, and articles. Though printed sources may be more reliable than some websites, they can still have biases or misinformation. Always try to test the information you read against other sources to tell if it's accurate.

Pre Activity 2: Testing a Websites Trustworthiness

Pass out the Internet Trustworthiness Worksheet. Next go to the following website:

<https://gracetennant.wordpress.com/>. As a class, determine if the website is trustworthy or not using the questions in the worksheet.

Main Activity: Evaluating Websites

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Each group will do a google search on one of three topics below. You may use the suggested topics below or substitute topics you have been studying in class.

- Thomas Jefferson
- The Northwest Ordinance
- The Aztecs



Using the Internet Trustworthiness Worksheet, students will have 15 minutes to evaluate the top three results of their search and decide which site is the most trustworthy. Afterwards, discuss what the students have learned from the activity. Here are some possible questions to guide the discussion:

- What website was the top result when you searched it in Google? Was this also your most trustworthy source?
- Is there anything you noticed your top three results had in common?
- Was it easy to find information about the author or creator of the webpages?
- What 'kind' of website was your most trustworthy? Did it end in '.edu', '.gov', '.org' or something else?
- Who had Wikipedia as one of or the top google results for their topic? Is Wikipedia a trustworthy source? Why or why not? Wikipedia can be edited by anyone. This means you should not always trust it's content. However, many Wikipedia pages do have a "References" section, and this can be used to find trustworthy sources.
- Do you think you can rely on only the top three results of your Google search to have a full understanding of your topic? Why or why not? Where else would you look for sources?

