

Analyse a Web Site (4R3)

Task: Read critically to examine a website to determine whether it contains accurate and reliable information.

With the World Wide Web, you have a huge library at your fingertips. When you search for a topic, you may find 20 or even 500 websites. Which sites do you choose? It takes a good reader to find a good site and to find specific information. Using the reading process and the strategy of reading critically to examine a website can really help.

Step 1: Set a purpose for reading.

- a) Ask yourself, “What do I want to find out about the topic?” For example, if your topic is “rocks”, your purpose for reading might be “How are igneous rocks formed?” and “What are some examples of igneous rock?”
- b) Think of two questions that you would like to answer. These questions will help you to stay focused while doing your research.

Step 2: Open the template file. Use the template file provided to record your questions. Type one question in each of the cells labeled “Question #1” and “Question #2”:

Click in this cell, and type your first question.	Question #1:	
	Website URL:	Information that relates to my question:

Step 3: Open your internet browser and search for a site related to your topic.

Step 4: Preview the Site

When you reach a site that you might want to use, start with a quick preview to see if it has information about your reading purpose. Use the checklist below to get a “feel” for what the website has to offer.

Preview Checklist

1. the site name and introductory information: This is usually found on the home page.
2. the main menu choices: Do they relate to your topic?
3. the graphics and overall “look”: Does the site have a professional look? Are there lots of advertisements, and other unrelated or inappropriate information?
4. the source (who created and pays for the website): Look for a link entitled “About Us” to find out more about the creator of the website. Also, look carefully at the address of the site. The three letters after the last dot, called the “Top Level Domain”, will tell you about the kind of site you are browsing.

- com - commercial businesses; this is the most common TLD
- gov - U.S. government agencies
- edu - Educational institutions such as universities
- org - Organizations (mostly nonprofit)
- mil - Military
- net - Network organizations
- ca - Canada
- th - Thailand

(from www.webopedia.com/TERM/T/TLD.html)

5. the first few pages of the site.

When researching a topic for a school report, a site from a university or museum will probably have more appropriate and valid information than a commercial site. Be aware of web addresses containing a “tilde” (~), as this often indicates that the site is a personal page posted by an individual. The information may not be approved by the hosting site.

For more information about reading websites critically, visit the Media Awareness website at:

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/index.cfm>

Step 5: While reading a website, remember to stay on track. Set a time limit for your research, and focus on your reading purpose.

Step 6: If the site appears to contain valid information for your reading purpose, record the URL (address) of the site in your template file. Click in the first box under the heading “Website URL”, and type the address. You may also highlight the address in the website, copy it and paste it into the template.

Step 7: Scan the website. Record information that relates to your topic, in point form using your own words. Use the box in the template file under the heading “Information that relates to my questions”. If you use words taken directly from the site, you must use quotation marks and cite the source of the information.

Step 8: When done, save and print your work.