

The Internet

Can the Internet help me?

The Internet has an unimaginable amount of information on it. It has information available at the touch of a button, but do we really need it all? It's all very well having all this information, but how much of it will be useful, relevant and correct? We need to learn how to search effectively and pick only the information that we need. This booklet aims to help you do exactly that.

Can you believe everything you see on the Internet?

No, you shouldn't always accept what you see as the truth. Misinformation and disinformation exist on the Internet as well as good information.

Disinformation is a deliberate attempt to mislead or deceive, resulting in inaccurate information.

Misinformation is an honest mistake where someone simply got the facts wrong or the information is wrong because it's out of date. Eg. some organisations might not update their websites very often, resulting in out of date info.

What can we do to help ourselves work out if a website is okay?

We need to learn to evaluate a website. This means looking at it carefully and deciding if it's worth using. Learning these evaluation skills will help us make decisions about:

1. what to believe
2. what to doubt
3. what to pay attention to
4. what to care about

Evaluating a website

When you evaluate a website it is useful to use “R U SURE” which is printed below.

R - Do you **RECOGNISE** the author? You are more likely to get good information from a recognised author like the BBC or the British Government than you are from Joe Bloggs who has his own personal website.

U - Is it **UP TO DATE**? If the information isn't up to date then it may be wrong and you should check it against other sources. Also sometimes evidence comes to light that challenges historical facts.

S - Any **SPELLING** mistakes or errors in grammar? If there are a lot of spelling mistakes or grammatical errors then it's not a very good website to use.

U - Check the **URL** (address of website) - is it a reliable one?

.gov websites are authorised by the government of a country.

.edu (used in USA) **.ac** (used in UK) and **.sch** websites are educational

.co and **.com** websites are used by businesses often to sell you something

.org websites are used by organizations to provide information from their own point of view. Depending on the organization they could, for example, be providing disinformation or promoting violence or racism.

R - Is it **REAL**? Lots of people put websites on the Internet to mislead people. This is either for fun or for other, more sinister reasons. Spoof websites can be fun to look at as long as you realise they are fake. Some organisations deliberately put false information onto their website to try to make people believe something that isn't true.

E - Is it **EASY** to read and not biased in favour of anyone or thing? Can you understand the information on the pages? If it is not easy to read or understand then it isn't much use. Is the information biased? Do they only give one point of view or many different ones? Is the information laid out well with photographs, diagrams or other visual information to help you understand the content?

Searching the Internet effectively

Before you log on to the Internet, you should have a good idea of what you are looking for, otherwise you are wasting your time and money. Unless you know the URL (address) of a website you will have to use a search engine. This is basically a computer programme which searches through vast amounts of information and gives you a list of websites it thinks are relevant. It will sometimes give you results of millions of websites and pay no attention to the quality of information. Without a clear search strategy its like wandering about a huge library trying to find a book without asking for help. It pays to spend a little time planning your search strategy.

STRATEGIES FOR SEARCHING

1. You should write down your word or words and then think of alternatives.

Eg. World War 2 / Second World War / WW2 / WWII

2. You should then think of related keywords.

Eg. World War 2 – Holocaust, Germany, Hitler, Churchill, The Blitz, rationing

3. Decide which search engine you think will be the most helpful. A list of search engines can be found below.

4. Try your first word or phrase in the search engine. You can narrow or widen your search by using BOOLEAN LOGIC. This uses AND, OR, NOT in a search.

AND and NOT narrow searches down

If you wanted information on rationing in any country, but not Germany you could use the following:

Rationing NOT Germany Narrows the search by giving you sites on rationing in any country except Germany.

If you wanted information on rationing in Britain only you could use the following:

Rationing AND Britain Narrows the search by giving you sites on rationing in Britain only.

OR makes a search bigger

If you wanted to find websites on rationing, but also other aspects of how the war affected people at home, you could use the following:

Rationing OR The Home Front Gives you sites which contain information on the

rationing as well as sites about the Home Front.

5. When you have a list of websites, look at them carefully. READ the description of the site, provided under the title. Is it what you are looking for? You may be looking for information on the life of George Clooney and you see the following list of websites. Which one do you pick?

George Clooney

Buy his latest film Leatherheads, from our extensive range. Other titles include.....
www.tesco.com

George Clooney

Gave a magnificent performance in Leatherheads. One of his best films ever....
www.cinema-reviews.co.uk

George Clooney

Find out more about his life, biographical information, personal interview with George...
www.biographies.com

George Clooney

My own personal website. Having the same name as a film star is fun. It can cause confusion though.
www.george-c.freeserve.co.uk

You must read the descriptions otherwise you will end up on a website that will not give you any help at all. Site 1 will allow you to buy George Clooney's film, site 2 will let you read a review of the film, site 4 belongs to someone with the same name. Only site 3 will give you information on George Clooney's life and would be the most useful.

People tend to look at a list, not read it properly, then click on the first site they come to. Then they wonder why they can't find what they are looking for.

READ THE DESCRIPTIONS OF WEBSITES!!

6. If you can't find anything relevant you may have to change your search engine and start again.

You will find a short list of search engines on the next page. There are lots of others, but these are some of the more popular ones.

Search Engines

Choose the best search for the type of information you need.

www.altavista.com Very powerful search engine. Very good for tracking down unusual / unique words and phrases. You can limit the search to UK pages only.

www.google.co.uk Very good search engine which is the top choice for many people. Highly recommended as a first stop in your hunt for information. Can limit search to UK sites only. Also clicking on the NEWS tab gives you recent newspaper articles related to your search.

www.bbc.co.uk Can limit search to UK sites only and will also give you recommended sites which are high quality sites recommended by the BBC. Also gives you news stories related to the topic by clicking on the NEWS tab.

www.yahoo.co.uk Yahoo uses Google to search, but organizes websites into categories. All websites suggested by Yahoo have been reviewed by an editor so all websites should be relevant. Another good one to start a search with. Can narrow down search to UK pages only.

www.vivisimo.com This search engine puts your results into folders as it breaks down the results into themes. Eg. POLLUTION - folders would include - causes, acid rain, water, air. You then choose the relevant folder to look in for web addresses.

www.ask.co.uk Ask Jeeves is a cross between an encyclopaedia and a search engine, this will try to answer your question from a database of existing answers it has indexed. It also sends your query to other search engines and lists possible websites. Can narrow down search to UK pages only.

www.dogpile.com This is called a metasearch engine which means it searches using several different search engines at the same time. It lists the results by the search engine that found them.