

Source or Scam?



Concept
Learning Skills



Length
20-25 Minutes

Inquiry Prompts

- Is it mostly facts or opinions online?
- What's a good source of factual information?
- How does bias affect a message?
- Why would someone put unreliable information online?

Instructions

In this activity, students work with a partner to evaluate 2 online sources. (Depending on how much time you have, you can limit this activity to 1 unreliable site. You may source your own site for this activity, or check out some hoax sites collected by the [Iowa State University Library](#).)

- 1 Review the [Source or Scam? presentation](#) with your students. The presentation can be printed for your students to reference as it is a series of questions they can use to evaluate online sources for reliability, accuracy, relevance, and bias.
- 2 Have partners apply the criteria to 2 websites (one more reliable than the other). We suggest:
 - [The Burmese Mountain Dog Club of America](#)
 - [American Kennel Club](#)
- 3 Ask students to capture their analyses in the [Source of Scam? graphic organizer](#). In each section, they can record the evidence that the site is accurate/inaccurate, relevant/irrelevant, unbiased/biased, and reliable/unreliable. Encourage them to verify information with other, trustworthy sources before they accept what they read.

Message for students: To get to the truth about something, it's important to think critically, or to ask questions, about what you're reading.

Materials Required

- [Source or Scam? presentation](#)
- [Source or Scam? graphic organizer](#)
- Pencils, colored pencils, or markers
- Computers (tablets, phones) with Internet access

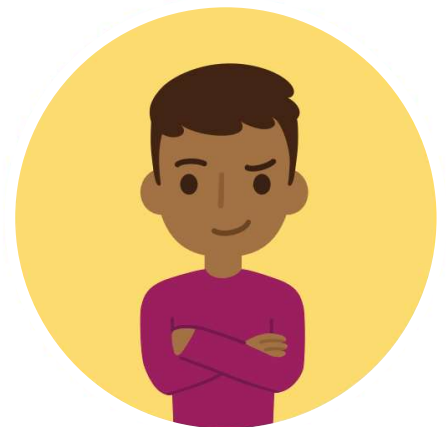
Artifacts

Students can upload their graphic organizers to **Storyboard**, where they can reflect on what they learned from the activity.

Information Literacy: Evaluating Online Resources

Question if the site is **relevant**. Ask yourself:

- How old is the site?
- Does the site specialize in the information you want?
- Does the site go in-depth on a topic?
- Does the site cover a bunch of unrelated topics?
- Is the information useful?
- Is the content high quality?
- Does the site offer new information that can't be found in another source?



Name: _____

Information Literacy: Evaluating Online Resources

Question if the site is **accurate**. Ask yourself:

- Can I check if this information is true anywhere else?
- What sources are used by the author(s) of the site? (If you don't know, is there a way to contact the site creators to find out?)
- When was the site last updated? (Again, can you contact someone to find out?)
- Are there a lot of spelling mistakes or dead links on the site?
- Is there any outdated or obviously wrong information on the site?



Name: _____

Information Literacy: Evaluating Online Resources

Question if the site is **unbiased**. Ask yourself:

- What's the purpose of the site?
- Who created or sponsors the site?
- Can anyone add content to the site, or is it controlled?
- Who is the site's target audience?
- Does the site try to present all sides of a story or issue?
- What opinions are expressed on the site?
- How objective is the tone of the author(s)?
- Does the information promote forms of bigotry like racism, sexism, ableism, classism, or homophobia?



Name: _____

Information Literacy: Evaluating Online Resources

Question if the site is **reliable**. Ask yourself:

- Does the site look like it was made by experts or people who don't know what they're doing?
- Are the authors of the site qualified to give info about the topic? Can you check their credentials?
- What is the site's domain?
 - .edu - educational
 - .gov - government
 - .org - non-profit organization
 - .com - commercial
 - .biz - businesses
 - .info - used by anyone
 - .net - networks
- Is the site trying to sell you something?
- Do other reliable sites cite or link to the page?



Name: _____

Source or Scam?

Website: _____

What makes you think this site is
or isn't: **Accurate**

What makes you think this site is
or isn't: **Relevant**

What makes you think this site is
or isn't: **Biased**

What makes you think this site is
or isn't: **Reliable**

Name: _____