Junior Scholastic

SKILLS SHEET Name: _____ Date: _____

EVALUATING SOURCES
Not All Sources Are Created Equal

The internet is full of useful information—as well as a lot of information that's incorrect or biased. Sometimes telling the difference is harder than you might think.

When conducting research, it's important to check whether your sources are credible and accurate. That's especially true for online sources, because the web makes it easy for anyone to publish just about anything. (Remember: You should always have more than one source for any fact you use.) Here are some questions to help you determine whether your online source is trustworthy.

1. Who created the website? The site's URL (web address) can help you figure this out. Sites that end in **.gov**, for example, were created by the federal government. Typically, **.edu** means the site is affiliated with a college or university, and **.org** means that an organization, such as a nonprofit, is behind the site.

2. What are their credentials? What qualifies this organization or individual to provide information on this topic? If a person runs the site, consider his or her occupation, years of experience, and education. If an organization runs the site, consider how long that group has been around, and if it exists only locally or has a national or worldwide presence.

3. What is the site's purpose? Does the site exist solely to inform or teach, or is it selling a product or advocating for a particular cause? Is there evidence that the site is biased or prejudiced in favor of a certain outcome? (For example, a website that's dedicated to attacking or supporting a specific political candidate will not be objective.)

4. Is the site current and functional? Try to find the date when the web page or site was last updated. (If it's old, the data may no longer be accurate.) Are the links working properly? Broken links, spelling mistakes, and other errors are signs that a website may not be trustworthy.

Choose a topic to examine further. Then pick two sources from your research to analyze below.

WEBSITE 1: _____

Author or agency/group and credentials: _____
_____

Purpose of site: _____
_____
_____

When was it last updated? _____
Is it a reliable source? Explain. _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

WEBSITE 2: _____

Author or agency/group and credentials: _____
_____

Purpose of site: _____
_____
_____

When was it last updated? _____
Is it a reliable source? Explain. _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Putting It All Together See if you can verify the information your online sources provide through a non-web-based source, such as a book, a map, or another reference.