



How to Conduct an Effective Web Search

NOTE: A link to the student version of this “How To” can be found in the student edition at point of use. It can also be found in the Student Resources menu at the top of the screen.

In *How to Conduct an Effective Web Search*, students are first given guidelines on how to efficiently search the Web for information. Caution students about plagiarism, emphasizing the need for them to put all information they find in their own words. Make sure they understand that this does not mean simply changing a few of the author’s words per sentence but, rather, finding new ways to convey the information. Also, remind students to keep track of which Web sites they used to find information. Discourage students from printing out entire Web sites that relate to their topic. Sometimes clicking on the print icon will cause the entire Web site to print, which could mean many pages. Tell students that they should filter their information and only print what is necessary. Alternatively, have students record summaries of Web sites in their science notebooks, complete with the proper citations.

Next, review with students the steps for identifying the sources of Web sites and reviewing whether those sources are credible. Emphasize that students should give more weight to information cited on Web sites from scientific sources, government sources, and major nonprofit organizations. Web sites published by individuals and smaller organizations tend to have less oversight and review, and consequently may contain misinformation. Wikis and blogs in particular may be sources of information that originate from opinion rather than from fact. If students find useful information on wikis or blogs, they should make sure that the information can be traced back to a credible scientific source. You may wish to model for students how you would compare an example of information on a particular topic that can be found at a credible source with a source that is not as credible.