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Turn Students into Fact-Finding Web Detectives

The web is overflowing with information — true, false, and everything in between. But the web also can be your students' best tool for fact-checking and verifying information. Help students use the web effectively to dig deep (and search wide) in confirming or debunking the veracity of the information they see. As teachers, it's our role to help demystify the web and show students how to search with concrete methods, tricks, and tools. Most of all, it's up to us to show students how to be skeptical of what they see on the web without becoming cynical.

Tips for Helping Students Find Facts on the Web

- **Give students access to the best fact-checking resources.**
  - Show students how to rely on trusted online fact-checking organizations like FactCheck.org, PolitiFact, and Snopes, among others.
  - Students can also learn to do their own fact-checking with a tool like the Wayback Machine or a strategy like reverse image search.

- **Train students to read the web differently from print.**
  - In the words of Stanford researchers Sam Wineburg and Sarah McGrew, **students should learn to read the web "laterally, jumping off the original page, opening up a new tab," not just vertically like they would read a text in print**.[1]
  - Along with this, help students be aware of bias. However, also understand that bias doesn't disqualify a source but rather informs our view of it.

- **Teach students a framework for "showing their work" for a web search.**
  - Ask students to "show their search" just like you'd ask them to "show their work" in math. A simple graphic organizer for showing a web search can go a long way.
  - Reinforce that fact-finding online is as much about the process as it is about the results.

More Resources for Fact-Finding and Media Literacy on the Web

- ✐ **Stanford History Education Group: Civic Online Reasoning: sheg.stanford.edu/civic-online-reasoning**

- ✐ **Stanford University Libraries:** *Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning*: **purl.stanford.edu/fv751yt5934**

- ✐ **The News Literacy Project: www.thenewsliteracyproject.org/**

- ✐ **National Association for Media Literacy Education: namle.net/**

- ✐ **The Lamp: thelamp.org/**

[1] **https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/11/02/why-students-cant-google-their-way-to.html**