



Cybercitizen Challenge

Fact or Folly?

Guiding Level: Pathfinders / Rangers

Topic: Authenticating online information

This activity helps to raise awareness about the importance of double-checking what you find when surfing the Internet and provides strategies for authenticating online information.

This activity requires an internet connection.

Preparation:

Print out the [Fact or Folly?](#) worksheet and the [Hoax or Warning](#) handout.

At your meeting

Web site activity

1. In pairs or groups of three, have the girls visit two of the websites listed in Part One of their [Fact or Folly?](#) worksheet.
2. Using the worksheet questions as a guide, have them determine whether these sites represent *fact* or *folly*. (Instruct them to record their answers to each question in the table.)
3. Once completed, review the answers as a group. Key points to emphasize are:
 - **Where:** Breaking the Web address down to its domain name (which follows the “www.” notation) can tell you about the organization that is hosting the page you’re on.
 - **Who:** Conducting a search of the author’s full name, in quotation marks, will not only give you links to other things that have been posted by that author, but also what other people and/or organizations are *saying* about the author and his/her credibility.





- **What:** To verify information, experts suggest using the “Triangle” method. If you can find three reliable sources of the same information, then you can assume that it is reliable.

Email Activity

1. Distribute the Hoax or Warning handout.
2. Give the girls time to review and discuss their answers. For those who have decided to “check it out”, ask them how they would do this. (When a sensational or questionable email arrives, one of the easiest ways to confirm whether or not it is true is to conduct a search for the subject line or main topic, plus the word “hoax.” If it is a hoax, this will most likely come up in the search results. Or, they can visit websites like the ones listed below.)
3. Have the girls return to their computers and visit the Urban Legends (<http://urbanlegends.about.com/>) and Snopes (<http://www.snopes.com/>) websites to see the many different types of hoaxes that have been found online.





Fact or Folly? Worksheet

We all know that the Web is a valuable source of information. However, it also contains information that isn't reliable.

Getting the goods on websites

How critical an observer are you? With your partner, visit two of the websites listed below and, using your *Where*, *Who* and *What* questions as a guide, decide whether or not your websites are the real thing.

- <http://allaboutexplorers.com/>
- <http://www.cspinet.org/biotech/pdtake.html>
- <http://genochoice.com/>
- <http://www.dhmo.org/>

Investigate...	Site 1	Site 2
Where are you? Can you determine who put this page together?		
Who is the author? Is this information written by the website's creator or does it come from someone else? What is the background, credentials, or authority of the author of this web page? (Hint: try conducting an online search of the author's full name, in quotation marks.)		
What type of information does the site provide? How would you go about verifying the information presented on this web page?		
What's your verdict: Fact or folly?		





Hoax or Warning?

This is a real email message that a friend has just forwarded to you:

Subject: Cell phone charging



VERY IMPORTANT...PLEASE READ

Never, ever answer a cell phone while it is being CHARGED!!

A few days ago, a person was recharging his cell phone at home.

Just at that time a call came and he answered it with the instrument still connected to the outlet.

After a few seconds electricity flowed into the cell phone unrestrained and the young man was thrown to the ground with a heavy thud.

His parents rushed to the room only to find him unconscious, with a weak heartbeat and burnt fingers.

He was rushed to the nearby hospital, but was pronounced dead on arrival.

Cell phones are a very useful modern invention.

However, we must be aware that it can also be an instrument of death.

Never use the cell phone while it is hooked to the electrical outlet!

What would you do?



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- a) Delete the email message
- b) Forward it
- c) Check it out



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