

Technology

Using the Internet as a Sea Otter Research Tool

Objectives:

Students will learn to judge the credibility of a website by deciding if information reviewed is valuable. Students will also learn how to use the Internet as a tool for research.

Materials:

- Website Search Sheet
- Enough computers with Internet access for students to work in groups of two or three.

Additional Resources:

Below are suggested websites that students can use to research sea otters.

Defenders of Wildlife

<http://www.defenders.org/sea-otter/basic-facts>

Monterey Bay Aquarium Sea Otter Research and Conservation Program

<http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/conservation/research/saving-sea-otters>

Marine Wildlife Veterinary Care and Research Center

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/Science/marine-wildlife-vetcare/>

Background:

The Internet has revolutionized information gathering. Students who know how to access credible websites can use them to supplement information from books, periodicals and other sources. However, like any other source, websites must be checked for the accuracy. They also must be properly cited when used as a reference in a written report. This internet search activity can be used to teach students how to decide if a website has valid and useful information on the topic they are researching.

Procedures:

- Before going to the computer lab, give students the Website Search Sheets. Ask them to formulate a question they want to research about sea otters, such as how do sea otters forage for food? What is the relationship between a sea otter pup and its mother? How do sea otters impact the fishing industry?
- Have students fill out the Website Search Sheet
- While in the computer lab, review with your students how to search for information using search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing. Explain to your students that if they search effectively (more specific than general), time won't be wasted trying to sift through the mountain of information they may pull up.
Discuss with your students how to decide if a website is credible. Remind them

that anyone can create a website and put information on the Internet, it is up to them to judge the value. Brainstorm with students on how they can judge the credibility of a website. Who is the website author? Who are they writing for? Why was the website created? What are the goals of the website?

- As students read for information and find sites, have them complete the worksheet. Students should visit at least three Web sites to verify accuracy of information gathered.
- Have extra copies available.

Extension:

Use this lesson as a prelude to a research project. Have students develop their search question into a thesis statement.

This lesson format can also be used for other projects requiring research.

Have students research the questions they had from the reading articles.

Assessment Rubric:

Have students write a two to three paragraph paper using their question as a topic sentence and the facts they find as supporting sentences to answer the question.

Website Search Sheet

Question to be researched:

Name of website:

Address:

Focus of website seems to be: _____ Education and information
_____ Opinion exchange
_____ Advocacy and ways to get involved
_____ Issues and answers
_____ All of the above

Notes:

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