Evaluating Resources Task

You will be working in groups of four to evaluate a group of web pages. Each of you will be examining sites from a different perspective. You will be ranking the sites and reporting back to the class comparing your rankings with the other groups. You should be prepared to defend your rankings with concrete examples of why you ranked the sites as you did.

You will each be responsible for completing an evaluation chart, focusing on the role you assume within your group. You are encouraged to be perceptive, identify all of the components that a credible website should have, and make a decision as to whether or not your sites are trustworthy sources of information.

Complete the Following Steps

- **STEP ONE**
  You and your group members will meet and decide who will assume each of the four **roles listed on the next pages of this document.**
  Each member of your group will need the following materials:
  *Evaluating Websites Chart - The worksheet for recording observations.
  *Role Questions - A list of questions each role focuses on.
  Each member in your group should complete his/her **own** chart using his/her individual role.
  *Website Ranking Chart—A chart to use in the group discussion to ranking the websites in order or effectiveness for a research project. Each group will need to fill out ONE of these per group.

- **STEP TWO**
  Each group should select a discussion leader, whose job it will be to make sure each member gets a chance to contribute toward reaching a consensus about the best and worst sites. Groups will also need to select a recorder to fill out the Website Ranking Chart during the group discussion. You will need only one of these completed.

- **STEP THREE**
  Examine the sites you have been given. As you examine each site, record any relevant information in your chart. Begin to rate the sites 1 through 5, with 1 being the best. Think of these ratings as grades with a 1 equal to an "A," a 2 equal to a "B," etc.

- **STEP FOUR**
  Discuss your findings. The group discussion leader should make sure everyone's opinion is heard and considered. The recorder should be filling out the Website Ranking Chart as you discuss. Each group member could have a different rating for the site based on his/her role in evaluating the site. Now your job is to take all components of a site's effectiveness and together reach a consensus on which sites are best for research purposes. Upon completion of your examination, your group will compare findings and ratings with the rest of the class during the class discussion period. You will have to defend your findings with concrete examples and reasons why you have ranked the sites as you have.

ROLES/PERSPECTIVES

You are to each assume a particular role within your group. Each group should have one of the following specialists:

1. Content specialist:	2. *Authority/Credibility* **specialist:**
• Does the site cover the topic comprehensively? Accurately?	• Who is responsible for this site? Who sponsors it? Hint: truncate each section of the URL until you are able to find the sponsor.
• Can you understand what is being said? Is it written above or below your level of understanding?	• What are his/her credentials?
• What is unique about this site? Does it offer something others do not?	• Have the authors of the site cited their sources? Are their links to these sources?
• Are the links well-chosen? sufficient?	• What is the domain name? Does it end in .com, .gov, .edu, .org, .net? Is it a personal page?
• Currency: Can you tell the date the information was created? the publication date? the date the material was last revised? Are these dates meaningful in terms of the subject matter?	• Is that a meaningful clue in evaluating the site? (You can't always judge a web page by its suffix. Some commercial sites provide solid information. Some university sites offer less-than-serious personal pages to graduate students.)
• Would you get better information in a reference book or another source?	• Who else links to the site? (You can perform a *link check* in Google by entering "link:webaddress" in the search box. Is it linked to by reliable sites? What do other sites say about this one?
• Would you include this site as a reference on a works cited page for a research paper?	• Would you include this site as a reference on a works cited page for a research paper?

3. Bias/purpose specialist:	4. Usability/design specialist
• Why was this site created? (to persuade, inform, explain, sell, parody, promote, other?) • Is it a personal, commercial, government or organization site? • Is there any bias? Is only one side of the argument presented? Is there a hidden message? Is it trying to persuade you or change your opinion? Does it appear that any information is purposely omitted? Is the bias useful to you in some way? • Can you distinguish facts from opinion? • Would you include this site as a reference on a works cited page for a research paper?	• Is the site easy to navigate (user-friendly)? • Is there a well-labeled contents area? • Do all the design elements (graphics, art, buttons, etc.) enhance the message of the site? Is there consistency in the basic formats of each page? • Are there any errors in spelling or grammar? • Do the pages appear clean, uncluttered? • Do the links on the site work? • Would you include this site as a reference on a works cited page for a research paper?

Evaluating Web Sites Chart

Evaluator's role—Place a checkmark in the blank before the type of expert you chose to be for this assignment.

____Content   ___Authority/Credibility   ___Bias/Purpose   ___Usability/Design

Site name and URL	Strengths	Weaknesses	Rank
Site #1_____			
Site #2_____			
Site #3_____			
Site #4_____			
Site #5_____			

Site #6_____			
Site #7_____			

In one or two sentences, defend your choice for the TOP ranked website related to the criteria you were assigned.

Role Questions

Content Specialist:

- Does the site cover the topic comprehensively? Accurately?
- Can you understand what is being said? Is it written above or below your level of understanding?
- What is unique about this site? Does it offer something others do not?
- Are the links well-chosen? sufficient?
- Can you find the date the information was created? the publication date? the date the material was last revised? Are these dates meaningful in terms of the subject matter?
- Would you get better information in a reference book or another source?
- Would you include this site as a reference on a works cited page for a research paper?

Authority/Credibility Specialist:

- Who is responsible for this site? Who sponsors it? Hint: truncate each section of the URL back until you are able to find the sponsor.
- What are his/her credentials?
- Have the authors of the site cited their sources? Are there links to these sources?
- What is the domain name? Does it end in .com, .gov, .edu, .org, .net? Is it a personal page?
- Is that a meaningful clue in evaluating the site? (You can't always judge a web page by its suffix. Some commercial sites provide solid information. Some university sites offer less-than-serious personal pages to graduate students.)
- Who else links to the site? (You can perform a link check in Google by entering "link:webaddress" in the search box. Is it linked to by reliable sites? What do other sites say about this one?
- Would you include this site as a reference on a works cited page for a research paper?

Bias/Purpose Specialist:

- Why was this site created? (to persuade, inform, explain, sell, promote, parody, other?)
- Is it a personal, commercial, government or organization site?
- Is there any bias? Is only one side of the argument presented? Does it appear that any information is purposely omitted? Is there a hidden message? Is it trying to persuade you or change your opinion? Is the bias useful to you in some way?
- Can you distinguish facts from opinion?
- Would you include this site as a reference on a works cited page for a research paper?

Usability/Design Specialist:

- Is the site easy to navigate (user-friendly)?
- Is there a well-labeled contents area?
- Do all the design elements (graphics, art, buttons, etc.) enhance the message of the site? Is there consistency in the basic formats of each page?
- Are there any errors in spelling or grammar?
- Do the pages appear clean, uncluttered?
- Do the links on the site work?
- Would you include this site as a reference on a works cited page for a research paper?