The internet is a wonderful resource if you can separate the good information from the bad. This skill station provides students with tools to evaluate the quality of the information they receive from web sites.

Internet Source Evaluation

The internet is a hugely valuable information resource, but for every good web site there are many sites offering questionable information. What criteria do you use to sift through the trash? Criteria for rating the quality of web information is as easy as **CARS**:

Credibility. Is this a trustworthy source (.gov, .edu, .org)? What are the author's credentials? Is there evidence of quality control? The goal is an authoritative source that supplies good evidence *and* allows you to trust it.

Accuracy. Is the information up to date, factual, detailed, exact, and comprehensive? Is there anything on the web page that strikes you as unbelievable? When was the site last updated? The goal is to find a source that is correct today (not yesterday) and gives the whole truth.

Reasonableness. Is the web site fair? Does it offer both sides of the issue? Does it offer a balanced, objective look at the subject? The goal is to find a source that engages the subject thoughtfully and reasonably and is primarily concerned with the truth.

Support. Does the web site list other sources of information and contact information? Is there a list of citations? The goal is to find convincing evidence for the claims made.

Review the following web articles about calcium intake in our diets:

Web site 1: http://www.buycoralcalcium.com/coral_calcium_story.html
Web site 2: www.nap.edu/html/dri_calcium/

Rate these web sites using this scale and record your observations in the following table.
0=Poor
1=Good
2=Excellent

Criterion	Web Site 1	Web Site 2
Credibility		
Accuracy		
Reasonableness		
Support		
Totals		

Internet Source Evaluation Teaching Notes

Approximate Time Required
Skill Station: ~15 min class time
Group processing: 5 min max

A. **Explain the Need**: We are all aware of the hoaxes and lies propagated via the internet. Other sites seem reasonable, but make questionable claims. This skill station provides students with tools to judge the quality of internet resources.

B. **Define and Model**: The sites in the station are obviously different. One suggests you buy calcium supplements from the Japan Sea because it's better than ordinary calcium, while the other is a government web site that discusses dietary calcium needs. Other web sites could be chosen based on course content.

   Combine this skill station with research projects, writing assignments, or academic controversies.

C. **Practice:** This skill station works well in a networked classroom where students have access to computers. Alternatively, the skill station can be assigned for students to complete when they have computer access.

D. **Evaluate:** Students take time to evaluate web sites, but should also be encouraged to evaluate their own use of the web for quality information. Ask students to critically evaluate every web resource, especially those they cite in their writing projects.

E. **Feedback/Reflection**: Critical evaluation is an important part of any information gathering. Students should reflect on how this skill station fits into their portfolio of information management skills.