



## Contents

Ethical Computer Use	2
Copyright Laws	3
Word Processing Tips and Tools	4
Etiquette for Digital Communication	5
Online Resources	6
Safe Surfing	7
Tips for Using the Internet for Research	8
How to Evaluate Web Sites	9

## Ethical Computer Use

Computers are more common than ever before—almost every office desk in the country has a computer of some sort, and most schools have them in classrooms. The number of computers in the home is growing, too.

Computers can be used to do wonderful things, but they can also be misused. Knowing some simple ethical guidelines will ensure that you are always doing the right thing.

### Using Computers at School

Whether in the classroom or at the library, you likely spend time working at a computer. Remember that the computer is there to help you get your work done. If you instead use the computer to play games, check your personal e-mail, or look at offensive material on the Internet, you are inappropriately using the resource that is being provided for you.

Many institutions are taking action to prevent such misuse. Hidden software applications watch everything users do while they are on a machine, including which Web sites they visit, what e-mails they send, even what keystrokes they type. If you are engaging

in inappropriate activity on a school computer, you could be suspended from school, or perhaps even prosecuted.

**A good guideline to keep in mind: Do not do anything on a computer that you would not do if your teacher or parents were standing behind you, watching.**

### Using Computers at Work

While it might seem harmless to do a few small personal tasks while you are at work, the costs really do add up. According to the organization SurfControl, American businesses waste \$54 billion every year due to personal use of company computers.

### Plagiarism and Copying

Plagiarism is the act of taking somebody else's ideas and passing them off as your own, whether it be one or two sentences or an entire term paper. The "cut-and-paste" feature built into modern operating systems makes a lot of mundane tasks, like moving a paragraph of text, quick, and easy—but also makes plagiarism all too easy. Be on guard against falling into this trap.

It is acceptable to quote sources in your work, but you must make sure to identify those sources and give them proper credit. Also, some Web sites do not allow you to quote from them. Be sure to check each site or resource you are quoting to make sure you are allowed to use the material.

### Tip

#### Using Internet Connections Responsibly

- Because your school may have a fast Internet connection, you may be tempted to use these connections to download large files. Check with your teacher first, as there may be policies forbidding this.
- E-mail systems leave a "digital paper trail." This means that what you type into an e-mail can be found by a system administrator. Be sure not to abuse company or school e-mail systems—it may come back to haunt you!
- If you download any files or applications, be sure to check with your system administrator before using them. Downloaded files are one of the chief sources of viruses, which cause millions of dollars in damages to computer networks every year.
- You would not steal office supplies from your office or school, so make sure you do not take home computer-related resources like CD-ROMs or floppy disks.

## Copyright Laws

**A** copyright protects someone who creates an original work. When you create something—a book, a play, or a single sentence—you can copyright it, thereby claiming that you created it, and you are the owner. The goal is to prevent unauthorized copying of that work by another party.

Copyright protection is provided by the Copyright Act of 1976, a federal statute. At one time, if you wanted to copyright something you had to fill out a form, file your work with the Copyright Office in the Library of Congress, and pay a fee. Today, this is no longer the case. If you create an original work, it is automatically protected by copyright law—even if you forget to put the “© 2004” marker on the document. However, registering a copyright with the office does provide some additional protections, should you ever have to go to court over your creation.

### Obtaining Permission

So what do you do if you want to use a portion of a copyrighted work in your own work? In order to do this, you need to obtain permission from the copyright holder.

Obtaining permission depends on the work in question. If you want to use an excerpt from a book, you will need to write a letter to the publisher, since they are the owner of the copyright.

(Sometimes the author, or an organization other than the publisher, owns the copyright. Check the copyright page in the front of the book to make sure.) Each instance is different, but many publishers are willing to grant permissions to individuals for educational purposes. If you want to reproduce information you found on the Web, contact the Webmaster or author of the article to request permission.

### Duration and Public Domain

So once a copyright is in place, how long before it expires? The answer depends on when the work was created. For all works created since January 1, 1978, copyright lasts until 70 years after the creator’s death. For works created before that date, the answer is considerably more complex. The copyright would last anywhere from 28 to 67 years from the date of creation, with possible options for renewal.

Once a work’s copyright has expired, that work is considered to be in the public domain, meaning that nobody owns it and anybody can reprint it as they please. This is why you can find so many different printed versions of classic literature from writers like Dickens, Shakespeare, and the like—the publishers do not have to pay any fees for the right to print those books.

### Some Common Misconceptions About Copyrights

- “If it does not say it is copyrighted, it is not copyrighted.” Original work published after March of 1989 is copyrighted, whether it says so or not.
- “I found it on the Internet, therefore it is okay for me to copy it.” Most of the text on the Internet is indeed copyrighted. Copying information from the Internet is a serious breach of copyright, and can result in prosecution.
- “It is okay to put copyrighted material on my Web site, because I do not charge people to look at it.” It does not matter whether you are making a profit from the reuse of copyrighted material—you are distributing it, and that is illegal.
- “I have changed the material, so it is no longer copyrighted.” Copyright law says that only the owner of the copyright can make “derivative works”—that is, new works based on the existing material.
- “I can reprint the material, because it is considered fair use.” Be careful! “Fair use” refers to the right to reprint brief excerpts from copyrighted works. However, there are no clear definitions on how much of a work can be used. Some examples of fair use include quoting a book in a book report or parodying a work.



## Word Processing Tips and Tools

One of the most common types of application software used in both business and school is the word processor. Word processing software allows you to create and edit documents such as reports, term papers, and essays. Many word processing programs will even allow you to create documents in HTML, which can be posted to the Web. To make the most of word processing, you will need to learn some of the features many of these programs offer.

### Checking for Errors

Many people have come to depend on the spell-checker feature of word processing programs. Inside each word processor is a large file called the *dictionary*. Unlike the dictionaries that you will find on your bookshelf or online, this file does not contain any information about the meanings or pronunciations of words; instead, it knows how to spell them.

As you type into a word processor, the program constantly scans the dictionary. Every time you tap the space bar, the program knows you have just completed a word, so it looks up that word in the dictionary. If it cannot find it, the program will let you know, usually by placing a red line underneath the word.

Depending on the program, you may have a variety of

options—for instance, looking at other words that the program thinks you meant to type, adding the word you typed into the dictionary so the program will recognize it, or telling the program to ignore it.

**Remember that spell-checkers and grammar-checkers are not perfect.**

For instance, if you meant to type the word *stay* but accidentally typed *sty*, the program will not alert you to the error, because *sty* is a valid word. It is important to proofread each of your documents.

Many programs now also include grammar-checkers.

Grammar-checkers compare sentence structures in documents to a file of common errors.

### Tracking Changes

Sometimes, more than one person will need to work on a single document. Using the Versions feature (or Tracking feature) of a word processing program makes this easy. The program keeps copies of different versions of the document as changes are made, so you can refer back to earlier versions.

Another helpful feature is Comments. Comments allow you to make remarks about the document for other group members to see. They can make changes based on your comments, revise the comments, or leave more comments in return.

### Tip

#### Online Calendars

Keeping track of all the work you need to do can be difficult—it is easy to get overwhelmed when you are faced with a mountain of books and papers and are not sure where to start. In cases like this, you might find that using an online calendar will help you get organized and handle your work efficiently.

Online calendars work much like paper day-planners that you buy at the office supply store, but instead of writing out tasks by hand, you type them into your Web browser. The calendar site keeps track of appointments, due dates, and to-do lists. Keeping all your tasks entered into an online calendar is one way of making certain you are accomplishing them in the smartest order.

You might also want to use the reminders feature; these are alarms that tell you when something must be done. The reminder might be a sound, a pop-up box, or an e-mail sent to you by the calendar site.

Also, since the information is stored online, you can check your calendar from anywhere—from home, school, or any place that has an Internet connection.

## Etiquette for Digital Communication

New rules of etiquette have evolved for the new communication media provided by the Internet—e-mail, chat rooms, and newsgroups. Nicknamed “netiquette,” these basic guidelines are important to keep in mind whenever you are communicating with someone online.

### E-mail

Of all the conveniences provided by the Internet, e-mail is the most widely used. It has changed how people live, work, and socialize. Letters that used to take days to arrive in the mail now take mere seconds. Business communication has become much more efficient thanks to e-mail. Here are a few things to keep in mind when sending e-mail:

- ✓ Do not send large attachments, unless the recipient is expecting them.
- ✓ When forwarding e-mails, be sure to trim off unnecessary information like old headers and quotes—these can build up quickly!
- ✓ Keep your communication appropriate, and do not say anything about someone that you would not want them to hear. Even after you click Delete, e-mail records stay in the system for a long time, and can even be found years later.
- ✓ Never send or forward chain letters. Even if they seem like a good idea, they are often fraudulent—and will likely anger the people you are sending them to.

### Chat Rooms

Chat rooms can be useful communication tools, but they can also be raucous free-for-alls. Some things to keep in mind:

- ✓ Choose the chat room wisely. Some chat rooms are populated with questionable people, so do some research first.
- ✓ For your safety, always remain anonymous.
- ✓ Take turns with the conversation. Just like in a real conversation, allow people to finish their thoughts, and do not interrupt.
- ✓ Be aware of “lurkers,” people who are reading the conversation but not taking part. Try not to say anything that might hurt somebody’s feelings.

### Newsgroups

The Usenet system is made up of thousands of discussion groups, each on a particular

topic. Having a rewarding newsgroup experience requires some basic netiquette, including the following guidelines:

- ✓ Stay on topic. Most Usenet groups are very specific, and readers do not appreciate posts that do not fit the topic.
- ✓ Avoid flaming. Newsgroups are particularly ripe for flaming—people tend to get passionate in these conversations. Never type something that you would not want to say out loud.
- ✓ Know your facts. There is no fact-checking process in Usenet—anybody can say anything he or she wants. Just because somebody says something in a newsgroup does not mean it is true—remember this when quoting or replying to someone.

### Tip

### General Netiquette Guidelines

- Behave as though you were communicating face-to-face.
- Remember that your words can be misinterpreted, and things like sarcasm, body language, and irony may not come across.
- Do not “flame.” A flame is an aggressive or insulting letter.
- Do not “spam.” Spam, or junk e-mail, is a billion-dollar problem, clogging mail systems and wasting time. Do not add to the problem.
- Do not SHOUT. Make sure your Caps Lock key is off.
- Do not distribute copyrighted information. Just because something is on the Internet does not mean it is free.
- Do not hide behind a screen name. Behave online as you would in the real world—honestly, ethically, and wisely.



## Online Resources

One of the most useful elements of the Internet is the World Wide Web (also called “the Web”), which allows documents to be viewed by anyone anywhere in the world. This is particularly helpful when it comes to documents that are normally expensive or hard to find. For instance, many families do not own an encyclopedia, so a student who needs to do research would normally have to make a trip to the library. The Web makes it possible for documents like encyclopedias and dictionaries to be accessed by many people.

### Dictionaries

There are hundreds of online dictionaries. Some specialize in certain types of information, such as law, medicine, or technology.

- **Dictionary.com** The name makes it easy to remember; this site also contains a fully searchable thesaurus. ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com))
- **OneLook Dictionaries** A “meta-dictionary,” this site lets you type in a word once to search across more than 840 dictionaries. ([www.onelook.com](http://www.onelook.com))
- **Merriam-Webster** A Web version of one of the best-known print dictionaries, this site includes a “word of the day” feature, a thesaurus, and links to other research sites. ([www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com))

### Encyclopedias

Encyclopedias need to be updated often, making them a perfect choice for online delivery. Online encyclopedias are searchable, and many contain photos and illustrations.

- **Britannica Online** The online version of one of the most respected print encyclopedias offers both free and premium access, with more content and fewer ads in the premium version. ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com))
- **World Book Online** The online version of World Book does not offer any free information; you have to pay a monthly fee to access the entries, which include all the contents of the print versions dating back to 1922. ([www.worldbook.com](http://www.worldbook.com))
- **Encarta** A popular encyclopedia by Microsoft, the Encarta Web site offers lots of free content, but to access all their information you will need to buy either a subscription or a copy of the-CD-ROM. ([www.encarta.msn.com](http://www.encarta.msn.com))

### Other Resources

While dictionaries and encyclopedias offer lots of useful information, other specialized resource sites can give you information about other subjects.

- **Roget’s Thesaurus** The online version of the definitive thesaurus lets you search for words or browse them alphabetically or by category. The site also offers plug-ins that put dictionary and thesaurus buttons right in your browser window. ([www.thesaurus.com](http://www.thesaurus.com))
- **RefDesk** A comprehensive site with links to every kind of information imaginable. If you do not know where to start looking for a particular fact or statistic, start here. ([www.refdesk.com](http://www.refdesk.com))
- **Bartleby** Bartleby is fully searchable and contains the complete text of Bartlett’s Quotations, Simpson’s Quotations, the Columbia World of Quotations, as well as dozens of biographies, articles, and books. ([www.bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com))

## Safe Surfing

The Internet can be a wonderful place. There is much to learn, explore, and discover. You can find the answers to many of your questions on the Internet, often much more quickly than at the local library. And the Internet can put you in touch with people you might never have met—experts, writers, or just other students from around the world.

But the Internet can also be a dangerous place. There are Web sites that you would freely visit, and many others that you will want to avoid.

### Privacy and Personal Information

Information is valuable. Companies that operate on the Internet are constantly seeking more information about customers, as well as potential customers. By building vast databases of names, addresses, and information about buying habits, those companies can market their products and services with increased efficiency, thereby increasing sales.

But in addition to legitimate sites that ask you for information like name, address, or age, there are many questionable sites that are looking for data as well. Before you type any information into an

online form or in a chat room, be sure to evaluate to whom you are sending that information, and why you are sending it.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- ✓ Know to whom you are giving the information. Check the URL in your browser—does it match the domain you visited? Or were you “redirected” to another site without your knowledge?
- ✓ Why are you giving the information? If, for example, you are ordering something online, you will need to give your address in order for the product to be shipped. There should always be

a good reason for all information you provide. Never give out your social security number, your birth date, or your mother’s maiden name without adult consent. These are often used to secure credit reports, and giving these to a dishonest source could ruin your credit.

- ✓ Never give personal information of any sort to someone you meet in a chat room including your name, gender, and age.
- ✓ If you are still unsure whether it is safe to give the information, check with a parent or other trusted adult.

### Tip

#### Avoiding Physical Stress at the Computer

If you are going to be spending time in front of a computer, it is important that you minimize stress to your body. Here are some important things to keep in mind:

- Make sure you use a chair that provides strong back support. Be sure to keep your back straight while working, and keep your feet flat on the floor.
- Keep your wrists straight while you are typing. If your keyboard includes a “wrist rest,” be sure not to use it while typing. Resting your hands while typing causes the wrists to bend, which causes muscle fatigue and can put you at risk for injuries.
- Position the monitor so that it is just a little below eye level and about two feet away. This will prevent strain on your neck muscles.
- Make sure there is enough light in the room so that you can easily see the monitor without straining your eyes.
- Keep your monitor’s resolution set to a comfortable level. The highest possible resolution setting is not necessarily the best. Choose a resolution that displays images and text at a size that is comfortable to view.



## Tips for Using the Internet for Research

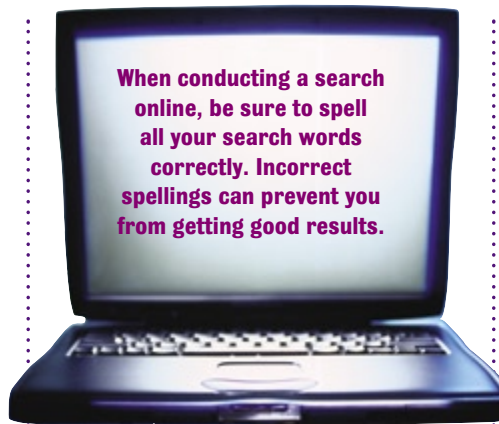
The Internet is probably the single most important new tool for research since the public library. However, the advantage provided by the Internet can also be its greatest challenge: There is so much information out there that it is difficult to know where to begin.

### Where to Start

A good place to begin work regardless of your research topic is Google. Arguably the most useful search engine, Google is an enormous “spider” (an automated piece of software that “crawls” the Web looking for information) that keeps an index of over three billion URLs.

Simply type your topic into Google’s search bar. By default, Google looks for sites that contain every word you type. For instance, if you enter the words *sports medicine*, you will see a list of sites that contain both of those words, not just one or the other. To get better results, here are a few tips:

- ✓ Place quotes around your topic. Searching for **"sports medicine"** will find sites where that exact phrase appears.
- ✓ Use NEAR. Entering **sports NEAR medicine** will return sites that contain both words, and have the two words close to one another.



- ✓ Exclude unwanted results. Simply use a minus sign to indicate the words you do not want: **"sports medicine" - baseball**.
- ✓ Stick to a single domain. If you only want to find information from a specific site, just add the domain after the search term along with the “site” tag, and Google will only look for documents on that site: **"sports medicine" site: www.espn.com**

### Refining the Search

Your Google searches will likely give you page after page of hits, each with a brief summary of some of the text from that page. Some things to think about while browsing your Google results:

- ✓ Links on the right hand side of the page (and sometimes at the top, in a colored box) are sponsored

links—this means that the company in question has paid to have their link show up. While this does not necessarily mean that the link is not worth exploring, it is usually an indicator that the site is selling a product or service, and might not be valuable for pure research.

- ✓ Google displays a few lines of text from each page and shows your search phrase in bold. Read the sentence surrounding the bold information to see if it is appropriate for your work.
- ✓ After you have entered your search phrase and have finished looking at the results, click on the “News” tab near the top of the page. This will show you recent news stories about your topic from a number of news services and wires.

### Unique Online Research Tools

- **iTools** This “meta-research” tool lets you search not only the Web, but also discussion groups, dictionaries, and other sources. ([www.itools.com](http://www.itools.com))
- **RefDesk** This site contains links to hundreds of different Web resources, each designed for a very specific purpose. ([www.refdesk.com](http://www.refdesk.com))
- **eLibrary** This premium site searches the full text of hundreds of periodicals, newswires, books, maps, and more. ([www.elibrary.com](http://www.elibrary.com))



## How to Evaluate Web Sites

While there is a lot of valuable information online, there is also a lot of information that can be deceptive and misleading. The books in your library have been evaluated by scholars and publishers; Web sites, however, are not verified. Learning to evaluate Web sites will make you a more savvy surfer and enable you to gather the information you need quickly and easily.

When you are trying to decide whether a Web site provides trustworthy information, there are a number of components to consider.

### Authorship

When dealing with information from a Web site, the first and most important question to ask is “Who wrote this information?”

Once you have found the name of the author (usually located near the top or bottom of the page), do a quick Web search to see what else that author has written. Typing the author’s name into Google will often return not only pages by that author, but also pages about that author, such as reviews of his or her work.

Check to see if the author has published in print. Search online for books that he or she has written. All this information will help you decide whether you should consider the person’s information trustworthy.

### Sponsorship/Publishing

Take a look at the group that is offering the information. Why have they published this article? Are they trying to sell a product or service, or are they an impartial organization providing unbiased information?

Determining the group that sponsors or publishes the site will help you decide whether the information is biased. For instance, if an article that suggests a certain pesticide is very effective is posted on the Web site of a company that sells that pesticide, it is probably biased.

### Accuracy

When you write a term paper, you are expected to provide sources for each of your facts. Look for Web sites that do the same thing by providing citations containing bibliographical information or references.

Also, look for clues that the information was written by someone knowledgeable. Spelling errors and grammatical mistakes are warning signs that the information provided may not be accurate.

### Timeliness

Most articles will contain information about when it was written and when it was last updated. Recent update information normally appears at the very bottom of a Web site’s main page, while date of authorship information usually appears near the title of the specific article.

The more recently something was written, the more likely it is to be accurate. An article from 1995 about “Internet trends,” for instance, probably does not contain up-to-date information.

### One Final Guideline

When using information from a Web site, remember to treat it just as you would print information. Never use information that you cannot verify with another source.