

Criteria:

1. Site design
2. URL
3. Content
4. Author/Publishing organization
5. Common sense

### **The Math Forum**

The Math Forum is a great example of why it's important to examine all five criteria of web site evaluation. If I was to look at the site and simply take into account the design of the site I would think it was just a Joe Schmo web site that somebody created in their garage. It has an ad right at the top, and a donation icon almost right away. It looks really poorly designed, and has a very old looking style. It looks like a web site that you would have seen in the early 90s as the internet was just starting up. So at first glance I would have disregarded it. However, just like we didn't judge a book by its cover in the 20th century in the 21st century we can't judge a web site just by its front page.

So I did a little more digging. The URL indicates that the site is done by an organization because it's .org. Sometimes web site URLs can say as much in what is not shown as what is. The URL is short enough, and pretty easy to understand. It doesn't appear to be hiding the site in dozens of directories, and it seems pretty simple so for URL the site checks out, certainly better than it did for Site Design. Then I move to content. This is where the web site starts to really excel. A .org is still a little fishy so I looked even further into the site and clicked on links (there were very few dead links, if any) and read the material and it seemed to check out. The site was pretty deep in terms of the content. There were some great resources and a diverse set of options for math help. So the site checked out in terms of content.

The next step that I take is to scroll down to the bottom where a site usually (particularly if it is legitimate) displays the publishing author or organization. In this case it is a University, and it is a "research and educational enterprise of the Goodwin College of Professional Studies. A quick check of what that means and it checks out. So the Author and Publishing organization check out and we're three for four. Lastly, I use common sense. In evaluating the site did I get the feeling that it was legitimate or were there parts of it that made me question? With this site, I got a great feeling about the content, and in evaluating it I didn't see any red flags except for the design which was quickly compensated for by the rest of the criteria that I set.

### **Mathematics of the Tootsie Pop**

This site was a little different from the Math Forum in that it was not an entire site, but just a post within a site. So, for step 1, the site design was ok. It didn't strike me as an academic site, or a site built strictly for the purposes of research. However, it did reflect the nature of the article. The site was fun looking, and well-organized. It certainly didn't raise any red flags in terms of being very unreliable, but it also didn't strike me as a serious, and research based site. The URL was a .com address, and had someone's name in it which usually indicates that the reliability is simply based on that person, and

not an organization they are affiliated with. Because of this, we can skip over step 3 for a minute and go to step 4. It doesn't necessarily disqualify Jason Santa Maria from being reliable, but without an accredited organization, he's a little more on his own to prove himself. The article was written by Liza Danzico and the page provides just a brief bio of her which doesn't provide any real clues as to her credentials or give her anymore credibility than any other Jane Doe who can create a blog online.

Back to step 3, the content of this site seems reliable, and there are footnotes at the bottom that cite various sources, one being Purdue University. The article doesn't offer any definitive answers or mathematic equations or theories so much as it describes how difficult it would be for a person to actually count how long it takes so it's mostly for the purpose of finding commentary rather than facts. So as I move into step 5 that's the moral of the story. Common sense tells me that I'm not going to use the site as a source for facts, even the Purdue fact is attributed to Purdue, not this site. I could use it as commentary as it does have some helpful commentary, but that would be the extent of my use of the site.

### **Figure This**

This is a site that I've seen used in elementary classes more often than at the High School level, but it is very effective for reinforcing math concepts using games and activities that families can do together. The site design is clean, with a lot of graphics and exciting colors. It is pretty intuitive, and appears very professional in its design so it checks out there. The URL is a .org address so that points to more reliability. Additionally the URL is pretty simple across the sites so it's easy to follow and you're not likely to get tricked into visiting a bad site.

The content is great. There are plenty of games to play and even a teacher-based site so that teachers can explore the features and use them in their classes. There are also resources for families that go beyond the games to encourage math learning at home. The organization is the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics which is a well-known and reputable organization. Common sense, taking into account all of the other criteria, tells me that it's a reliable and very useful site. Additionally, having experience using it and seeing its usefulness contribute to my conclusion that it is an excellent resource.