

## County Solutions Step Four: Working With Websites

**Time Needed:** One to two class periods

**Materials Needed:**

Student worksheets  
Computer and internet access

**Copy Instructions:**

Anticipation half sheets (*class set*)  
Reading page (*double-sided; class set*)  
Information Collector (*3 per student*)  
Overhead  
Teacher Guide



This is lesson four of nine in a series that culminates in a final class project. All steps can be found at [www.icivics.org/curriculum/countysolutions](http://www.icivics.org/curriculum/countysolutions)

**Lesson Objectives.** The students will:

- Describe six basic parts of an organizational or governmental website.
- Collect information about the class public policy issue from internet resources.
- Identify groups and individuals who are addressing the issue the class has selected.

### STEP BY STEP

**TEACHER SET UP**

Before class, find a minimum of three websites that relate to or directly address the problem selected by the class. The list of sites should include the county department related to class issue and one non-profit group. Complete the *Information Collector* for each website to use as a guide.

**ANTICIPATE**

by projecting the *Anticipation Overhead* and reading Sarah's story with the class. Ask students to think of one pro and one con for each resource. Examples:

	Pro	Con
Peers	Might know someone who can help	No help if not involved in the community
Books	Useful for learning about animals generally	Probably not specific to Sarah's community
Newspapers/ Magazines	Current, community-specific information	One-way communication only (not two-way)

**DISTRIBUTE**

the anticipation half-sheet *Civic Action and the Internet* and review instructions.

**ASSIGN**

questions 1-5 and the brainstorming activity to the class and review answers.

**DISTRIBUTE**

one *Navigating the Web* reading page to each student.

**READ**

through *Navigating the Web* with the class. You can have an actual website on an overhead/projector if you want to show these website elements in a more dynamic way and address any variations on the basic elements.

**DISTRIBUTE**

three *Information Collector* graphic organizers to each student.

**DISPLAY**

the *Information Collector* overhead and explain that they will be looking at real websites that deal with the class problem. They will be completing one of these organizers for each website you assign them.

**EXPLORE**

the first website with the class, modeling how students should fill out the *Information Collector*. (Students should fill in their first sheet with you.)

**INSTRUCT**

students to repeat this process for the other websites you have pre-selected using mixed-ability pairs.

**CLOSE**

the lesson by reviewing the results of each website as a class.

(Use this page to guide you through the discussion opportunities in this lesson.)

## **Anticipation Overhead**

As students enter, have the transparency visible to the class. (Alternatively, read through the sheet when starting the class.) When you get to the list of Sarah's actions, ask the students to share a pro and con of each of these sources of information.

### **Examples:**

	<b>Pro</b>	<b>Con</b>
<b>Peers</b>	Might know someone who is involved with animals in the community	Won't be able to help Sarah unless they are involved in the community
<b>Books</b>	Can help Sarah learn about the larger topic of animals	Probably don't have information specific to Sarah's community
<b>Newspapers/ Magazines</b>	Information will be current and probably community-specific	Provides one-way communication only (not two-way)

Students should suggest that Sarah get on the internet to learn about groups and individuals working to help animals in her community. The internet allows for communication and action– which will get Sarah that much closer to helping local animals. The internet also acts as a home base for groups, organizations and engaged individuals to create change in the community.

## **Information Collector Graphic Organizer**

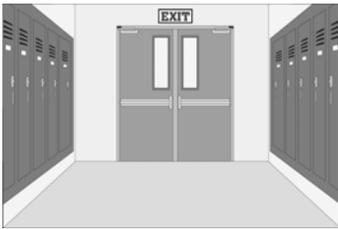
- 1) Preview the three websites you have selected. Make sure you have a completed version of the graphic organizer for each site.
- 2) Display the first website. Use the graphic organizer to review the basic components of a website and the 5W+H questions. Complete the first Information Collector sheet together as a class.
- 3) Assign the two remaining websites. You may choose to have each student be responsible for both sites, or have half the class do one and the other class do the second. If you split up the responsibility, make sure that you allow for each site to be reviewed as a class so students can have three complete *Information Collectors*.

## Working With Websites



Sarah wants to learn more about helping animals in her community. She isn't sure how she could help or if she should start her own group to help the animals.

Sarah looks in many different places for information and ideas...



She asks her friends at school. They are all interested in different causes, so they are not very helpful.

She borrows some books about animals from the library, but they were written years ago.



She reads the newspaper and a magazine about animals. These are pretty helpful because they are recent and they discuss upcoming events.

What resource is Sarah forgetting?  
How might it be more helpful than other types of media?



## Step Four: Working With Websites Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### Civic Action and the Internet

The internet is used for all kinds of purposes. It isn't surprising that the internet has also become a great place to participate in civic activities. What is it about the internet that makes it such a great place to help you be an engaged citizen?

**Read.** Look at each statement and circle the word or phrase that completes the sentence.

The internet...

1. ...allows information to be collected and shared **faster** or **slower** than printed media.
2. ...makes **more** or **less** information available to you in one place: your computer screen!
3. ...gives **more** or **fewer** people the opportunity to share ideas and participate in conversations.
4. ...creates communities based on **where people live** or **what people are interested in** or **both**.
5. ...provides information **only at certain times** or **on demand any time of day or night**.

**Brainstorm.** How can using the internet help you and your class address your selected problem? List three different ways you might use the internet for this project.



Civic Action and the Internet

## Step 4: Working With Websites Name: \_\_\_\_\_



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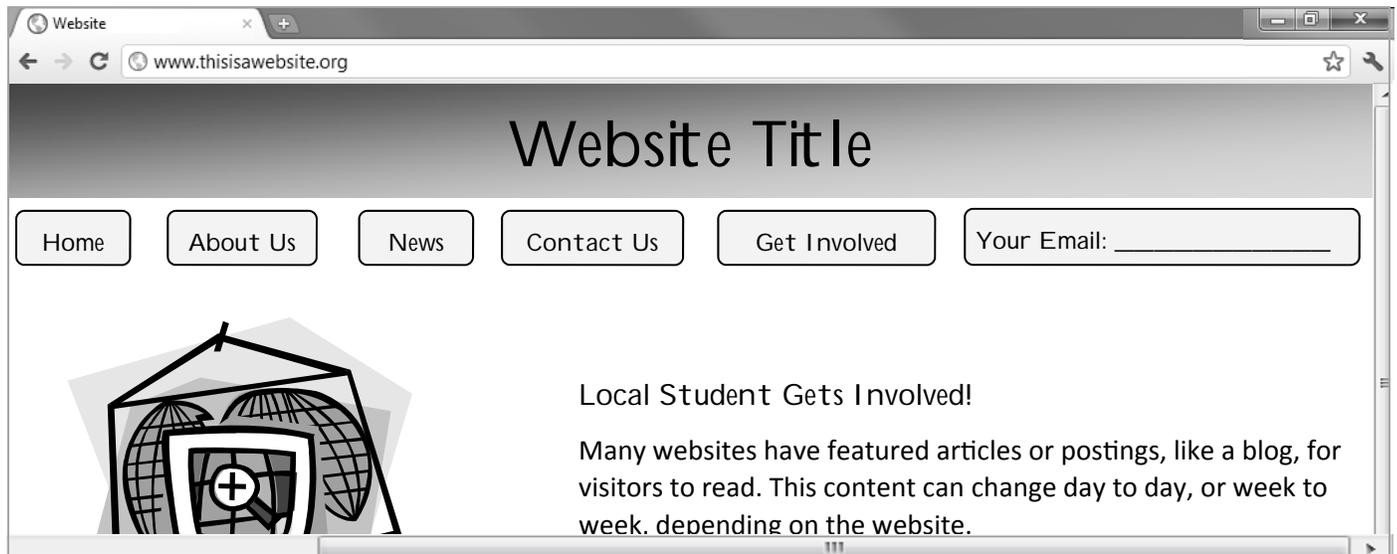


Civic Action and the Internet

# Step Four: Working With Websites Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Navigating the Web

The next step toward addressing your chosen problem is to find out *who* is doing *what* to find a solution. The internet is a great place to get the most up-to-date information. Here are a few things you should know about the way many websites are organized and where you might find valuable information.



Home

The *Home* tab will take you back to the homepage from anywhere on the website.

About Us

Click here for lots of helpful information about the site and the people behind it.

Mission Statement: describes the purpose of the site and organization.

Partners: lists or describes the other individuals, groups or agencies that work with or support this organization.

Staff: listing of the organization's employees and management and how they can be contacted.

News

This will link you to any media reports about activities, individuals, events, or resources connected with the organization.

Contact Us

Click here to find the organization's location, and contact information.

Get Involved

If the website belongs to an organization that depends on volunteers, donations and civic engagement you might see this button. It will link to a page that will tell you about ways you can become involved (examples: volunteer, donate money, sign a petition, write a letter, etc.)

Your Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Entering your email address usually signs you up for the group's newsletters and email updates.

# Step Four: Working With Websites

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Surfer Beware!

Anyone can publish a website, so you need to be a savvy surfer. Some sites have helpful information and a variety of opinions, while others are created by people that make up identities and take no responsibility for their content. The same 5W + H steps you used with news articles can help you judge the information you find in a website.



### Who is the source of the information?

- Has someone taken responsibility for the information on the site?
- Can you contact the author or organization through a real mailing address or phone number?
- Hint: Look for the *About Us* button.

### What are you getting?

- Is the information biased in any way?
- Is the information well-written and easy to understand?
- Does the site offer more than one viewpoint, or link to other viewpoints?
- Hint: Look for links to other sites or resources.

### When was the site created?

- Is there a date on the site that tells you when the information was added, or when the site was created?
- Do the links in the website still work?
- Hint: Keep in mind what kind of information you are looking for. How old is too old?

### Where does the site live?

- The last letters in an internet address tell you a lot about the site:
- **.gov** is the ending for all U.S. government department and agency websites (state sites end in their abbreviation. Ex: .il for Illinois)
- **.org** is *usually* for non-profit organizations and **.com** is *usually* for companies
- **.edu** is used by colleges and universities

### Why does the site exist?

- Is it trying to provide information, awareness and resources?
- Does it ask you to donate money, time, or your support? If so, does it tell you where the money goes?
- Hint: Look for a mission statement, or purpose, of the site.

### How can you tell what's useful?

- Apply the web 5W+H to any website you visit.
- Double check any facts or statements from questionable websites.

