

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE JUST PLAIN AWFUL

HOW TO JUDGE WEB SITES

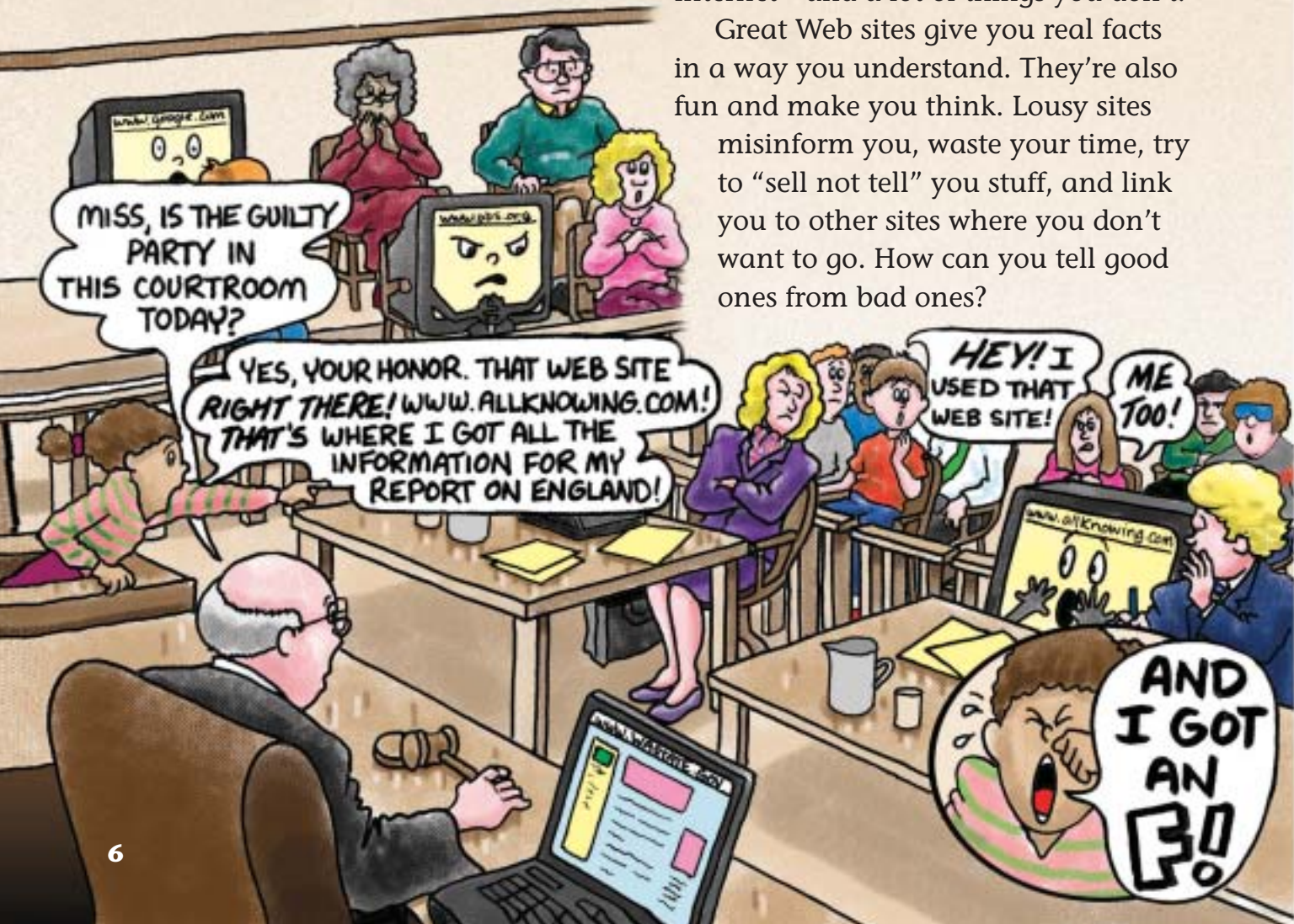
by Cynthia Levinson @ illustrated by Janise Gates

Are you interested in predatory animals? Do an Internet search and you might find a great Web **site** that explains how sea anemones eat worms. Then again, a not-so-great site might want to sell you safari tickets. And a truly awful site might tell you that beluga whales snatch people near ditches!

What is a **site?**
It's a place. So a Web site is a "place" on the World Wide Web.

Since you know one-ton whales don't live in ditches, you spot the awful Web site and ignore it. But another search about the Civil War might steer you to a site that claims soldiers used guided missiles. Is that false, too? You can learn almost anything you want on the Internet—and a lot of things you don't.

Great Web sites give you real facts in a way you understand. They're also fun and make you think. Lousy sites misinform you, waste your time, try to "sell not tell" you stuff, and link you to other sites where you don't want to go. How can you tell good ones from bad ones?



Spot the Dots

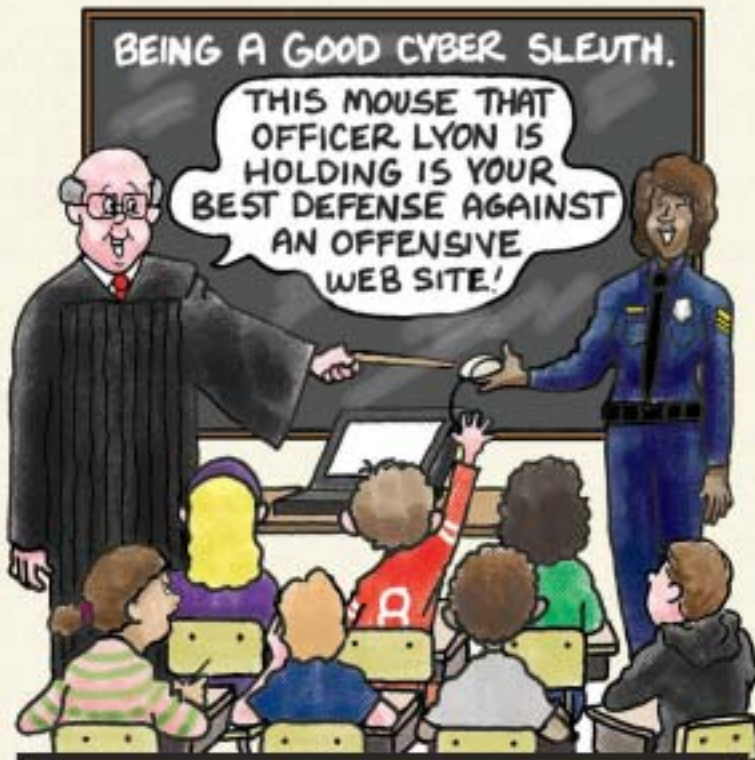
Web sites ending in **.gov** are created by the *governments*. For example, the White House Web site is **www.whitehouse.gov**.

Government sites may not be action-packed, but they're accurate and safe. Other generally accurate Web sites have different "dots":

- ⊙ **.edu** sites come from *schools* and *universities*. Information found on these sites and their links is usually carefully researched and can be fun, especially if the site comes from your own school.
- ⊙ **.museum** and **.lib** come from *museums* and *libraries* and can be great sites, too.
- ⊙ **.org** means the site is created by an *organization*. The PBS television network's site is **www.pbs.org**. "Dot-orgs" are often more reliable and long-lasting than . . .
- ⊙ **.com**, or *commercial*, sites. Anyone can set up a "dot-com" site. So, some are reliable and some are not. If you're researching predatory animals and come up with a **.com** Web site, you might want to steer clear—unless, of course, you're looking to buy a tiger!



....."THE INTERNET is a place to find things out," says Indiana.....



But beware—any site can make mistakes, and there’s no guarantee that a site you see today will be there tomorrow. And don’t be fooled by sites calling themselves “encyclopedias.” They can be full of inaccurate information.

Some advice:

- ⊙ Use sites your parents or teachers know, such as a public television or museum site.
- ⊙ Type addresses carefully—**pbs.com** is not the same as **pbs.org**.
- ⊙ Check the home page for information about the host, experts, and when the site was last updated. Can you e-mail the author to ask questions?
- ⊙ And, most important, use your good sense to sniff out good sites and snuff out bad ones.



is a place you can go on the computer to play games," says Robyn.....

Checklist

Use this checklist to decide if a site is good, bad, or awful. If you can check off all the statements, it might even be great!

- This is a Cool Site for Kids (see list below)
- It's a **.gov**, **.edu**, **.museum**, or **.lib** site.
- The information I need is easy to find and I understand it.
- The site is fun, I learn from it, and I want to find out more!
- There are few or no ads.
- Links take me where they say they will.
- I can link to "Contact Us" if I have questions.
- There are no spelling or grammar mistakes.
- The site doesn't ask for information about me. :-)



Some Cool Sites for Kids

American Library Association Great Web Sites for Kids:
www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/amazing.html

Ask for Kids: www.askforkids.com/

Awesome Library: www.awesomelibrary.org

Enchanted Learning: www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html

KidsClick: www.kidsclick.org

Kids Search Tools: www.rcls.org/ksearch.htm

PBS Kids: <http://pbskids.org/>

Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids:
<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/>