

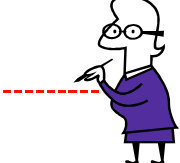



Deconstructing Web Pages

This exercise takes you step by step through the process of deconstructing a Web page in order to determine its credibility as a source of information.

Use these icons to guide your work:

	Read and think about what's being said
	Search for something on the World Wide Web
	Record your findings. Be specific!!
	Stop, reflect and write!



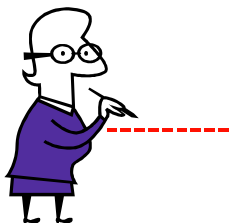
Imagine that you have to research a science project on the artificial sweetener, Aspartame. You come across an article is identified as a presentation made by a woman named Nancy Markle at the "World Environmental Conference on Aspartame"



View the page at www.rense.com/health/sweetners.htm

List 5 specific troubling effects of Aspartame mentioned by Ms. Markle:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Deconstructing Web Pages

What are you thinking about Aspartame right now?





Though the statements by Ms. Markle are passionate, further Web research is needed before accepting them as fact...

Let's ask some questions...

Who?



Who is Nancy Markle and who sponsored or attended the "World Environmental Conference on Aspartame?"

Is information about the author and conference clearly stated or easy to access?

No contact or background information about the author or the conference she attended appears on this Web page. However, a web search can be used to dig a little deeper.



Using the search engine Google, **search** for the name "Nancy Markle."

Visit several of the resulting sites.

List several key points of information you discovered about Nancy Markle:

- ✓

- ✓

- ✓

- ✓



Deconstructing Web Pages

Information on the 1995 "World Environmental Conference on Aspartame" is also sketchy.

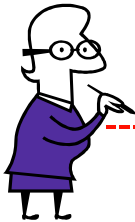


Search for information on where this 1995 conference took place.

Also, in the beginning of the speech, Nancy Markle says that "in the keynote address by the EPA..."

Who delivered the EPA's [Environmental Protection Agency] Keynote address at this conference?

What did you discover?



✓

✓

✓

What?



What are you getting?

Is the information biased?

Does the site use loaded language or make broad, unsubstantiated claims?

Can the information be verified through other sources?

Let's check the statements made by Ms. Markle for bias...

"...there are a lot of people out there who must be warned, *please* let them know this information."

"...people were jumping up during the lecture saying "I've got this [aspartame disease], is it reversible?"

The speaker uses emotional language to persuade her audience and to create a sense of urgency about spreading this message to a largely unsuspecting public. She makes strong assertions, but does so using vague language and anonymous sources. She implies that:

1. Aspartame causes multiple sclerosis

"...During a visit to a hospice, a nurse said that six of her friends, who were heavy Diet Coke addicts, had all been diagnosed with MS. This is beyond coincidence."

2. Aspartame causes diabetics to go into comas.

"...People were telling us...that they had relatives that switched from saccharin to an aspartame product and how that relative had eventually gone into a coma."

Deconstructing Web Pages

It's important to note the information gaps in statements like these. This article contains an abundance of unsubstantiated, anecdotal information, but very little factual evidence to substantiate claims.

Ms. Martini blames Aspartame for almost every illness known to mankind, including brain tumors, blindness and Alzheimer's disease. Yet she offers no links to medical studies that might support her claims.



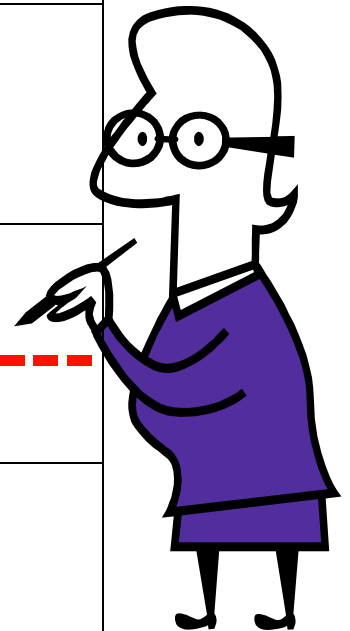
A critical reader might wonder why, if Aspartame is responsible for so many serious health problems, American medical associations have not raised the alarm.

Because she specifically mentions connections between Aspartame and Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes, it might be a good idea to see what these organizations have to say about this controversy.



Visit these organization web sites and **record** what they have to say about the aspartame connection.

<p>Alzheimer Association http://www.alz.org/media/understanding/fact/myths.htm</p>	
<p>The American Diabetes Association http://www.diabetes.org/main/community/forecast/pg23.jsp</p>	
<p>Multiple Sclerosis Society http://www.nationalmssociety.org/headlines-aspartame.asp</p>	
<p>Food and Drug Administration http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qa-adf9.html</p>	



Deconstructing Web Pages

When?



*When was this article posted?
Is it current?
Has it been updated?*

Although the "What's" are certainly enough to make you question the information on this Web page, let's follow through on the other W's, to see what we come up with.

Questions surrounding the currency of this information also bring up some interesting points.



Visit the original Web page where this information was found was at <http://www.rense.com/health/sweetners.htm>



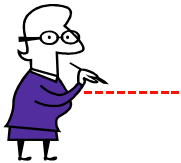
When was this message posted?

✓ _____



Further investigation shows that this document is "...a copy of an e-mail sent to a group of doctors following the 1995 World Environmental Conference," and that the original e-mail had since been modified, and combined with other information.

View the original e-mail at <http://www.dorway.com/betty/environ.txt>



When was this message posted?

✓ _____



Why is knowing the date of the information important?

Deconstructing Web Pages

Where?



Where is this Web page located? What's the nature of the site? Is it a personal home page?

Is it part of a medical site?

The article talks about the link between Aspartame and Multiple Sclerosis, so is it part of the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation's Web site?

Where is this Web page located? The original page where we found this information about Aspartame was at <http://www.rense.com/health/sweetners.htm>

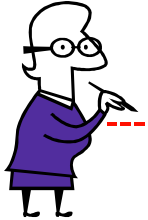


Pare this URL down to its base: <http://www.rense.com> to learn more about the nature of the Web site hosting this information.

What did you discover?

✓

✓



Why?



Why would I use this site as a credible source of information?

Can I verify the information I've found?

The question that remains to be asked, is WHY would we think this site is a credible source of information?

In researching this topic, we've learned a number of things:

- First, there are individuals and organizations that believe Aspartame poses a health risk
- Second, this belief is not shared by the medical profession at large and, claims about the risks associated with Aspartame have not been clinically proven.

Deconstructing Web Pages

Remember that your project was to research a science project on the artificial sweetener, Aspartame.



It's safe to assume that the individuals who believe that Aspartame is dangerous are sincere.

It would also be accurate to use this Web site as an example of one side of the Aspartame debate.

Look through this packet again. Summarize the main reasons this web site might not be the 'best' source of information on the topic.
