

# The WebQuest Model

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## What is a WebQuest, and how does it differ from any other online unit of study?

Look at an example first: (<http://www.teachtheteachers.org/projects/PWalker2/index.htm>)

A WebQuest is a structured, **inquiry-oriented activity** for students **utilizing resources found on the Internet**. They are literally “quests” in which students are given a task to complete and a role that helps them complete it, all while using the Internet resources provided by their teacher. Most often, tasks are divided up according to groups and students must work collaboratively to complete the task assigned.

WebQuests are written for students, not teachers. They should be **immediately accessible to the student** in terms of reading-level, motivation, and interest.

## What is the format of a WebQuest?

The traditional WebQuest contains an **Introduction**, a **Task**, the **Process**, an **Evaluation**, and the **Conclusion**. If the WebQuest is intended for a larger audience, a “Teacher Page” should also be added for those teachers who may want to use your WebQuest in their own classrooms. The process is usually broken up into group assignments. Sometimes each group has part of the task to complete; sometimes each group member is assigned specific task to bring back to their group members. This site breaks down each area of a WebQuest, explaining each thoroughly, and provides examples for each area:

<http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/staffdev/buildingblocks/p-index.htm>

WebQuests contain **pre-selected web sites** for students to access. The teacher comes up with a **task that is open-ended**, closer to an “essential question” type of inquiry.

WebQuests often ask students to take on a role and puts them in a hands-on, engaging environment.

The audience for a WebQuest is a student, not a teacher. No lesson plan style procedures should be apparent in the WebQuest document.

Keep in mind that WebQuests are NOT scavenger hunts; they involve higher-order thinking skills and should not be merely lists of questions for students to answer.

## **Why WebQuests? What skills are fostered in students when using a WebQuest?**

Students are presented with a question that needs to be answered—WebQuests are inquiry-oriented. Students must find out their own answer to that question via the materials they are presented with. WebQuests ask students to think, to explore, and to do. The materials are authentic; not pages from a textbook.

The task of a WebQuest should be motivating for students. Think of something that would truly be of interest to your students while still staying within the curriculum. By giving students a role (“You are a famous explorer...”; “You are an editor on a New York City newspaper...”; “You are a police detective...”) they have a point-of-view and they have a motivation. They take on a role, then complete the task, and reflect upon it back in their role as student.

WebQuests promote collaborative learning. Students must work together in a group to accomplish their task. Though each student has an individual role to play, they must convene with their group to put all the pieces together and create a final project.

Because each WebQuest contains an evaluation section, students are immediately aware of how they will be evaluated for this activity. Rubrics are included that clearly illustrate teachers’ expectations.

More and more, the web is full of useless or biased information as advertisers are becoming more savvy about using the web for marketing. The information superhighway is crowded with a lot of misleading junk. Ensuring that students are using quality resources is important. By screening and selecting the web resources students must use while on their WebQuest, you are guaranteeing that they are accessing educative and content-rich resources that are intended to inform. Providing these valid resources also help students recognize Internet sites of quality.

Because teachers pre-select web resources for students to use, WebQuests do not touch on student skills of Internet searching and evaluating web sites. However, the WebQuest structure allows the students to remain focused and stay on task. Other Internet activities can be used to foster Internet critical thinking. Here, students are evaluating content, and must learn to read for information in order to complete their task.

## **How does the use of WebQuests apply to our goals in this program?**

- WebQuests are based around **inquiry**. The teacher designs a path for students to follow, but allows them to come to their own conclusion based on the material presented.

- WebQuests promote **group work** and **collaboration**. Students must work together in a team to complete their task.
- WebQuests are **integrated into the curriculum**. Teachers locate **content-based Internet sites** for their students to use.
- WebQuests produce a product from students. There is a task that each team of students must complete and a **culminating activity** is a part of every WebQuest.
- The WebQuest task should be open-ended, so WebQuests are not as appropriate for fact-learning and rote information.

### Creating your own WebQuests:

- **Some basic web page proficiency is needed**, but you certainly don't have to be a master. You can even design WebQuests in Microsoft Word (then save as an html file). As long as you know how to make links and insert photos, you're okay.
- **Use the template page designed by Bernie Dodge to get started on your own.** <http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/staffdev/tpss99/mywebquest/index.htm>. Whack the template page and then edit it in an html program like Front Page or Dreamweaver. Don't have either of these programs? Download a free version of Netscape and access the Composer function—it's a very easy-to-learn html editor.
- **Become familiar with web resources in your subject area appropriate for students.** Visit teacher portals that contain lots of links to teacher- and student-friendly resources. Go to museum and government sites—there are a lot of free and quality web resources published by both of these sources. Always review web sites (and the links from them) to make sure they're appropriate for students in terms of both content and reading-level.
- Perhaps the first and foremost part of creating a WebQuest is coming up with a good task. Tasks should be interpretive, open-ended and motivating for students, all while meeting your curriculum goals and learning standards. Visit Bernie Dodge's page on creating good tasks: <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/taskonomy.html>.
- Want to just use some WebQuests? Go to <http://webquest.org> run by Bernie Dodge, and visit his portal of WebQuests. They are organized by grade level and subject area. Visit the "top" section for WebQuests that most closely his WebQuest model.
- For a collection of WebQuest teacher-training materials which can help you and also provide resources for training other teachers, visit another Bernie Dodge resource: <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/materials.htm>.