***What Will You Click on Next?***

Howard Rheingold – the author of *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online* (2012) – recently argued that one of the most important skills to master in today’s world was the ability to focus your attention while searching on the Web. He suggests that every learner should write down the three things that they want to get done BEFORE heading online. Then, they should make conscious choices about what to click on while surfing, only selecting sites that are likely to help them move forward towards their final goal. Use this handout to help guide YOUR choices while working online today.

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| ***Questions to Answer BEFORE Researching:*** | ***Your Response:*** |
| ***What THREE things are you hoping to accomplish while working on the Web today?***  Are there specific questions that you need to find the answer to? Are there specific topics that you need to examine? Are there specific resources that you need to find before you can move forward with the project that you are currently working on? Are there specific people that you need to track down or learn more about?  If today were a PERFECT research day, what products and/or pieces of information would you walk away from the computer with? |  |
| ***What kinds of resources and/or websites typically distract you while you are working online?***  Do you find yourself watching dozens of YouTube videos every time you sit down to work? Do you spend more time texting or instant messaging than you do studying? Do you get drawn into online games too often or too easily? Can you stay away from Facebook and/or Twitter for long enough to actually be productive while working? |  |
| ***How are you going to avoid those distractions today?***  Can you turn your phone off while working? What about changing the instant messaging settings on your Facebook profile? Can you agree to ignore YouTube or your favorite gaming site completely until you’re finished researching? |  |

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| ***Questions to Consider WHILE Researching:***  *Consider the following questions for EACH of the sites that you are thinking about exploring.* | |
| ***What makes you think that this website is worth giving your limited time and attention to?***  Is there something in the search results that has you convinced that it will be valuable? Have you used this site to find useful information in the past? Has a classmate found useful information on this site? Most importantly, which of your three daily goals do you think it will help you to accomplish?  ***How long will you spend searching for information on this website before deciding to look elsewhere?***  How confident are you that you will be able to find useful answers to your three daily goals on this particular site? Does that level of confidence change the amount of your remaining research time that you are willing to spend exploring here?  ***What searching and/or sorting tools can you find on this website?***  Is there a search bar that you can use to find additional content that might be useful? What about category or topic lists in a sidebar that you could click on to sort through content quickly? Have you looked for a “related resources” section to see if the creators of this site are writing about other questions that you are trying to answer or goals you are trying to accomplish? | |
| ***Questions to Consider AFTER Researching:*** | ***Your Response:*** |
| ***On a scale of one to five, how would you rate your productivity during today’s research session?***  Did you accomplish all the key goals that you set for yourself before starting to research today? Do you have leads on potential sources that might be worth exploring further?  Did you get distracted at any point while researching? What was it that caused you to lose focus? Is that one of the common attention traps that you struggle with or did something unexpected pull you away from your studies? |  |
| ***Which of the websites that you explored today were the MOST valuable?***  Do these sites share anything in common? Are they organized in a similar way? Created by similar organizations? Written in a similar style of language? Contain similar kinds of content?  What will you be on the lookout for the next time that you research to make sure that you find more sites just like these? |  |
| ***Which of the websites that you explored were the LEAST valuable?***  Were there any hints that you could have picked up on in the search descriptions or in the page layout that these sites WEREN’T going to be valuable?  What will you be on the lookout for the next time that you research to make sure that you don’t spend too much time on sites that don’t help you to accomplish your daily goals? |  |