



# Sticky Sites

## Essential Question

*How do websites attract visitors — and keep them there?*

**Estimated time:** 45 minutes

## Lesson Overview

Students learn about some of the features that attract and retain visitors to websites. They also learn to recognize the commercial motives that sometimes lie behind these “sticky” sites.

After discussing some of the website features that grab and hold their interest, students learn about the concept of “sticky” sites. Using the **Recipe for a Sticky Site Student Handout**, they identify “ingredients” that make a site sticky. First as a whole class and then in groups, students analyze sample sites and find the “Three C’s” that contribute to their stickiness: content, customizing, and community. Then students explore how stickiness can serve commercial motives, by ensuring that visitors will be exposed to advertising.

## Standards Alignment –

### Common Core:

**grade 6:** RI.2, RI.3, RI.7, RI.8, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.6, L.6

**grade 7:** RI.2, RI.3, RI.8, RI.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.5, SL.6, L.6

**grade 8:** RI.2, RI.8, RI.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.2, SL.5, SL.6, L.6

**NETS•S:** 3c

## Learning Objectives

*Students will be able to ...*

- understand that “sticky” sites encourage visitors to “stick around” and return often.
- analyze sample sticky sites to discover some features that make a website sticky.
- recognize the commercial motives behind many sticky sites.

## Key Vocabulary –

**sticky sites:** websites that attract many visitors who stay for long periods of time and return often

**motives:** reasons for doing something

**commercial:** designed to sell or promote something, usually a product, service, or brand

**customizing:** personalizing; creating something according to a person’s individual preferences or needs

## Materials and Preparation

- Paper and pencils
- Copy the **Recipe for a Sticky Site Student Handout**, two for each student.
- Preview the websites listed in Teach 1. Keep in mind that the sites listed provide some educational content, but also contain advertising. We chose these sites to illustrate the point that sticky sites for kids often include advertising. If your school does not want students to see advertising but still wants them to learn about sticky sites, you might choose other kinds of sticky sites that do not include advertising.

## Family Resources

- Send home the **Research and Evaluation Family Tip Sheet (Middle & High School)**.

## introduction

### Warm-up (10 minutes)

**INVITE** students to name the websites they visit most often and those where they spend the most time. (Students may name social networking sites, useful informational sites, search sites, or sites connected with their favorite activities.)

#### ASK:

*What keeps you coming back to the site again and again? What makes you stay on the site for a while once you're there?*

Sample answers:

- I always find things there that I like
- It helps me with my homework
- It has all of my favorite games
- I can check in with my friends on the site
- I can chat with other kids about my favorite books/TV show/sport/hobby
- It has a lot of information about the things I'm interested in
- It has the best photos of my favorite musician/athlete

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary term **sticky sites**. Explain that the kinds of websites they described are called “sticky sites.” They have content and features that make visitors want to “stick around” for a while, and come back often.

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary terms **motives** and **commercial**.

**DISCUSS** the reasons why people who run websites would like them to be sticky. Some educational sites have great content that their creators simply want to share with as many visitors as possible, as often as possible. Commercial sites use advertisements to make money; the more time visitors spend on these sites, the more ads they'll see. Whatever their motives, just about everyone who has a website wants it to be as sticky as possible.

## teach 1

### What Makes a Site Sticky? (15 minutes)

**DISTRIBUTE** the **Recipe for a Sticky Site Student Handout**, one for each student.

**CHOOSE** one of the following sites to explore as a class.

- **Discovery Games** ([dsc.discovery.com/games/games.html](http://dsc.discovery.com/games/games.html))
- **History Channel** ([www.history.com](http://www.history.com))
- **SI Kids** ([www.sikids.com](http://www.sikids.com))
- **Time for Kids** ([www.timeforkids.com/TFK/kids](http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/kids))
- **Lego** ([www.lego.com/en-US/default.aspx](http://www.lego.com/en-US/default.aspx))
- **Cartoon Doll Emporium** ([www.cartoondollemporium.com](http://www.cartoondollemporium.com))

**COMPLETE** the handout as a class, using the following questions to encourage student responses.

#### ASK:

*How many different kinds of content can you find on this site?*

Students may name stories, news, facts, photos, illustrations, videos, games, puzzles, quizzes, contests, blogs, and advertisements, among others.

*Do you think the content is new? Does it look like the content changes often?*

Some content may have dates that show students it is current. Other sites will contain content that changes before their eyes.

*Is there a place on the site to sign in or enter personal information?*

Sites might invite students to sign up for email or set up an account. Some offer incentives to enter personal information.

*Are there other ways for you to respond to things on the site? What do you think your responses might reveal about you?*

Students might be asked to answer a quiz or take a poll or choose their favorite features. How they respond shows their preferences and opinions.

*Are there ways to connect with other people on this site?*

Some sites might invite students to join a chat group or forum based on their interests. Others give them the opportunity to post comments and respond to other visitors' comments.

**GROUP** students into pairs or small groups, and assign each group one of the remaining websites.

**DISTRIBUTE** the remaining copies of the **Recipe for a Sticky Site Student Handout** and have students work together to find as many sticky “ingredients” as they can on their sites.

**INVITE** students to rate their sites by assigning points in each of the “Three C’s,” as follows:

- 1 point for each piece of *content* that feels “sticky” to them
- 1 point for each *customized* feature
- 1 point for each feature that makes them feel like part of a *community*

**ENCOURAGE** students to discuss their findings with the class.

## teach 2

### How Do Sticky Sites Sell? (15 minutes)

**INVITE** students to think about all the places they are exposed to advertising in their everyday lives. Remind them that advertising is anything that tries to promote or sell something. It might be trying to sell a product, a service, a store, or a brand.

**ASK:**

*Where have you seen advertising in the past week?*

Encourage students to discuss how each type of advertising gets its message across. Sample responses:

- television
- newspapers and magazines
- billboards
- the sides of trucks and buses or subway posters
- shopping bags
- radio
- websites

**REVIEW** the meaning of the Key Vocabulary term **commercial**. Point out that a website is considered commercial if it contains advertising. Commercial websites usually (but not always) have a URL ending with .com.

**EXPLAIN** to student that there are software programs that count the number of people who visit a site, which pages are visited, and in what order. The software program can also tell how long a visitor stays at each page and which ads the visitor clicks on. These measurements help show what parts of the site visitors like most.

**REVIEW** the site you analyzed as a class. This time, ask students to look for as many advertisements as they can find. Remind them that anything asking them to “Shop” or “Buy” anything are ads. Things that encourage them to read a certain magazine or watch a certain TV show are also ads.

**EXPLORE** with students the possible motives for making a site sticky. Sticky sites can be fun, entertaining, and interesting. They can also help advertisers sell things, because they hold your attention and keep you coming back for more. The more time you spend at a site, the more likely you are to be exposed to its advertising. More exposure means that people recognize and feel good about the advertised products, and may be more likely to buy them.

**REMIND** students that not all websites are commercial sites. Show them an example of a site that is free of advertising and any commercial motives, for example the PBS Kids “Don’t Buy It” website ([pbskids.org/dontbuyit](http://pbskids.org/dontbuyit)).

## closing

### Wrap-up (5 minutes)

You can use these questions to assess your students’ understanding of the lesson objectives. You may want to ask students to reflect in writing on one of the questions, using a journal or an online blog/wiki.

#### ASK:

*When we call a site “sticky,” what do we mean?*

Stickiness refers to a site’s ability to keep visitors there for long periods of time and to have them return frequently.

*Which features have you seen that make a site sticky?*

Students should know the “Three C’s” – content, customizing, and community – and be able to provide an example of each.

*What is a commercial website?*

Students should understand that a commercial site is any site that advertises, promotes, or sells something.

*Why do commercial sites try to be sticky?*

The longer people stay at the site, the more advertising they will see.

**REFLECT** on why it might be important to know what makes a site sticky. When students recognize what attracts them to a site and keeps them there, they can make conscious decisions about how much they want to “stick” to the site. If they decide to stay, they can focus on the features they like, and not on the advertising.

### Extension Activity

Have students imagine that they are in charge of creating a commercial site to sell a product of their choice. Have

them work in teams to plan features that will make the site sticky and expose visitors to their advertising. Students can create each feature on a sheet of paper, using illustrations and text, and assemble the sheets into a “home page.” Invite teams to present their home pages to the class.

## At-Home Activity

Have students design a sticky site that would attract a classmate or friend. Encourage them to think about the friend’s interests (sports, music, celebrities, hobbies, books). Then have students come up with features that would make the site sticky for their friend. Have students refer back to the **Recipe for a Sticky Site Student Handout** as an example, and encourage them to refer to the “Three C’s”. Students may sketch out the sites or create their own if the project spans several days.

# Sticky Sites

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## Directions

A lot of different ingredients can go into making a sticky site. The exact list of features depends on a person's interests: What's sticky to you might not be sticky to some of your classmates.

However, all the ingredients of sticky features can be grouped into the Three C's: **C**ontent, **C**ustomizing, and **C**ommunity.

For the site that you are investigating, assign points for each of the Three C's, as follows:

- 1 point for each piece of **content** that feels "sticky" to you
- 1 point for each **customized** feature
- 1 point for each feature that makes you feel like part of a **community**

## Content

Content is the stuff to see, do, or find at the site. Content may be factual information or news. It can also be games, music, pictures, or jokes. Tons of good content make a website sticky. Good content also changes often, so there's always something "sticky" on the site.

### What kinds of content are at this site?

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### Which content is the "stickiest" for you? Why?

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### How many points do you assign this site based on its "content"?

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## Customizing

Many sites use what they know about you to personalize what you see or do at the site. For example, a site might allow you to change the way its home page looks. Another site might ask you to register, so that when you return later, it can give you the content that especially interests you. This is called customizing, and it makes websites stickier.

**How is this site customized to meet your needs?**

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**How many points do you assign this site based on how it is “customized”?**

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## Community

Sites that make visitors feel connected to one another create a feeling of belonging, or community. For example, a game site might post the screen names of high scorers for all to see. A homework site might let kids post messages about their school. Other sites might encourage kids to join a club, take part in an opinion poll, or enter a contest. When visitors connect often enough, they begin to care about one another. Making visitors care about one another helps makes a site sticky.

**What features at this site make people feel like they are part of a community?**

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**How many points do you assign this site based on how it builds “community”?**

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# Sticky Sites

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**1. When a site is “sticky,” it encourages visitors to:**

- a) Stick around and return often
- b) Buy chewing gum
- c) Share their private information (full name, date of birth, etc.)

**2. Alvin created an account for a gaming website that he loves to visit every day. Which of the following answers would make the site appealing?**

- a) The site offers new games every week.
- b) Some of the games on the website are boring.
- c) He can't customize, or personalize, his game characters or home page.

**3. “Commercial” means designed to sell or promote something. What might you expect to see on a commercial website?**

- a) News stories
- b) A place to chat with friends
- c) Advertisements

# Sticky Sites

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1. When a site is “sticky,” it encourages visitors to:

- a) **Stick around and return often**
- b) Buy chewing gum
- c) Share their private information (full name, date of birth, etc.)

*Answer feedback*

The correct answer is **a**. A sticky site has features that encourage visitors to stay on the site. A site that asks visitors to share private information is not necessarily a sticky site.

2. Alvin created an account for a gaming website that he loves to visit every day. Which of the following answers would make the site appealing?

- a) **The site offers new games every week.**
- b) Some of the games on the website are boring.
- c) He can't customize, or personalize, his game characters or home page.

*Answer feedback*

The correct answer is **a**. People are more likely to visit websites that get updated regularly.

3. “Commercial” means designed to sell or promote something. What might you expect to see on a commercial website?

- a) News stories
- b) A place to chat with friends
- c) **Advertisements**

*Answer feedback*

The correct answer is **c**. Because commercial sites sell things, you should expect to see advertisements.