How to Use ProCon.org: A Step-by-Step Guide
(last updated March 9, 2011)

When it comes to locating accurate information regarding important public issues, the World Wide Web has plenty of thinly veiled propaganda sites, inaccurate and unsourced statistics, and often too little information in too many places. Our website, www.ProCon.org, is changing the Internet as it works to be the best online clearinghouse for accurate and unbiased information on important public issues.

The following information is a visual presentation of how to use ProCon.org. We have reprinted images from our issue websites and highlighted and explained specific content areas to familiarize readers with several key elements of our sites.

The first portion of this guide focuses on the parent site, www.ProCon.org, while the second portion delves into one of our issue websites, MedicalMarijuana.ProCon.org, which we selected over the others because it is our oldest and most popular website.

I. The Parent Site:
www.ProCon.org is the parent site, and it functions as a directory to our many issues. All of the ProCon.org issue websites can be accessed from our homepage whether they are Websites in Development (less than 80% complete), Archived (100% complete), or Active (between 80-95% complete).
One of the unique content areas on www.ProCon.org is our Toolbar with links to About Us, FAQs, Theoretical Expertise, Teachers’ Corner, Traffic, Contact Us, Donate, and Donors & Sponsors pages. By clicking on these links, visitors to ProCon.org can learn more about our organization’s history, staff, research practices, income and expenses, traffic data, and more.

Other unique content areas include Procon.org in the News, Our White Board, and Readers’ Comments, which appear in the left column of our homepage.
II. Issue Websites:

ProCon.org is made up of 40 individual issue websites (as of Mar. 9, 2011). Of these 40 individual issue websites, 20 are standard sites that took over 1,500 hours to build. Examples of standard sites include Euthanasia, ACLU, and Death Penalty. The other 20 sites are micro sites which take about 300 hours to build. Examples of micro sites include Prescription Drug Ads, Drinking Age, and Abortion. Some of our websites, such as Big Three Auto Bailout, 2008 Presidential Election, and Nuclear Power, are archived when they are 100% complete and no longer updated.

Examples of key elements from our issue websites will be taken from MedicalMarijuana.ProCon.org since that website is the oldest and most popular of the ProCon.org websites, so please assume that we just clicked on the Medical Marijuana link above.

Each issue website divides the controversial issue at hand into a number of information categories including Featured Resources (A), Main Issues (B), Questions (C), and Biographies (D).
A. Featured Resources: The boxes on the left side of each issue’s website constitute our Featured Resources. Those Featured Resources include **Top 10 Pros and Cons, Did You Know?** and **unique proprietary Projects** of charts, maps, or other data created for the particular issue website (a description of each section appears below).

i. The **Top 10 Pros and Cons** section takes about 5-10 minutes to read, provides the main arguments in the issue presented, and should make readers more knowledgeable on the particular subject than 90% of their society.

ii. The **Did You Know?** section provides entertainment value by presenting little known fun facts to engage our readers with our complex and important topics.

iii. Our proprietary **Projects** contain charts, graphs, maps, photos and/or other information created for the specific issue’s website. For instance, the Medical Marijuana website has a Featured Resource called **Peer-Reviewed Studies on Marijuana** which contains data on the date/place the study was published, a description of the study, and whether the study was found to be pro, con, or not clearly pro or con.
Medical Marijuana

Medical Studies Involving Cannabis and Cannabis Extracts (1990 - 2011)

Studies are listed as Pro, Con, or Not Clearly Pro or Con, based on their conclusions regarding cannabis' potential medical benefit. Extracts, such as Sativex, are derived directly from the plant, and are not synthetically created. Studies involving man-made substances, such as Marinol, Nabulone, Cannabinor, and others were not included in this review. If there are any peer-reviewed studies involving marijuana that we have not included, please let us know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Study</th>
<th>Pro # of studies</th>
<th>% of total</th>
<th>Total Con %</th>
<th>Con # of studies</th>
<th>% of total</th>
<th>Total # of studies</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Double-Blind Human Studies</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.53%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Human Studies</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39.36%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26.26%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Animal Studies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>45.71%</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>32.86%</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>21.43%</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I. Double-Blind Human Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE / JOURNAL</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th>
<th>Pro, Con, or Not Clearly Pro or Con</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 1, 2011</td>
<td>European Journal of Neurology</td>
<td>Pro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Main Issues: These broad categories allow readers to quickly find the areas they would like to explore. For example, the Medical Marijuana site is divided into 10 main issues, including: Medical Value, Risks, and US Government and Medical Marijuana.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CORE QUESTION</th>
<th>Pros &amp; Cons by Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Should marijuana be a medical option?</td>
<td>Public Policy on Medical Marijuana</td>
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Medical Value:
- Medical Value
- American Medical Association (AMA)
- Marijin v. Medical Marijuana

Diseases / Conditions:
- AIDS (HIV) & AIDS Wasting
- Alzheimer's Disease
- Arthritis
- Asthma / Breathing Disorders
- Crohn's / Gastrointestinal Disorders
- Epilepsy / Seizures
- Giardia
- Hepatitis C
- Migraines
- Multiple Sclerosis / Muscle Spasms
- Nausea / Chemotherapy
- Pain / Analgesia
- Psychological Conditions
- Tourette's Syndrome
- Terminally Ill

Non-Smoked Marijuana:
- Medical Value & Risk

Risks:
- Medical Risks
- Teens & Adolescents
- Gateway / Stopping Stone
- Addiction
- Human Reproduction

US Government and Medical Marijuana:
- 1999 Institute of Medicine Report
- Legal US Medical Marijuana Patients
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)
- Food & Drug Administration (FDA)
- Federal Drug Scheduling
- Government Grown Marijuana

Access to Medical Marijuana:
- Clubs / Clinics
- Dosage / Potency
- Patients

Legal Issues:
- Legal Issues for Physicians
- US Government v. Patients / Clinics
- General Legal Issues

Chemical Composition of Marijuana:
- Marijuana and Its Byproducts Defined
- Biological Effects of Marijuana Consumption

Under each of the Medical Marijuana site's 10 main issues are several Sub-Issues with more specific subject areas. For example, in the Risks main issue there are five Sub-Issues. Readers can click on one of those Sub-Issues to see a list of related pro-con questions.

[Note: We do not provide referrals to or recommendations of marijuana dispensaries, cannabis clubs, physicians, or attorneys although we do reference them on this website.] Medical Marijuana Possession is a nonviolent, non-profit website that presents facts, studies, and pro and con statements on questions related to whether or not marijuana should be a medical option.

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Diseases / Conditions:
- AIDS (HIV) & AIDS Wasting
C. Question: After clicking on a Sub-Issue, the reader is presented with several related questions to explore. The reader then clicks on whichever question he/she wants, and a screen appears with Pro, Con, and General Reference (Not Clearly Pro or Con) responses to that question. Responses come from many sources including journals, government reports, scientists, journalists, scholars, or other sources whose information represents the best pros and cons to that specific question that we could find.

D. Sources: The source of each quote is linked to an individual biography containing the person’s pro or con position to the site’s core question as well as information on that person’s education, work experience, involvement, contact information, and other relevant data.
E. Expertise: Evaluating a person's expertise is difficult without knowing each person's background, training, affiliations, education, or experience. We feel that a guide to a person's Theoretical Expertise can be helpful, so we have built theoretical expertise ranking charts for each ProCon.org website to help differentiate the theoretical expertise of the various sources on our sites. Each source is assigned a 1-5 star rating based on the expertise they should theoretically possess.

Theoretical Expertise Rankings

Evaluating the credibility of one person's statements is difficult if not impossible, especially without knowing, for example, each person's background, training, affiliations, education, or experience. However, we feel that a guide to a person's theoretical expertise can be helpful, so we have built theoretical expertise ranking charts for each ProCon.org website to help differentiate the theoretical expertise of the various sources on our sites.

I. Our Rankings for Sources at Medical Marijuana ProCon.org
II. Our Methodology
III. Pros and Cons of Our Theoretical Expertise Ranking System
IV. Some Flaws in Our Theoretical Expertise Ranking

1. Our Rankings for Sources at Medical Marijuana ProCon.org:
   - Government Reports and Peer-Reviewed Studies
     Official vetted reports from international government bodies (such as the United Nations and the European Union), foreign governments (federal level agencies such as France's Ministry of Justice, South Africa's Ministry of Health, or Japan's Office of the Prime Minister), and US government agencies (state, federal, and quasi-government agencies, such as the Smithsonian Institution, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Legal Services Corporation) and peer-reviewed studies from academic journals (such as Science, Nature, New England Journal of Medicine, etc.) tend to have multiple editorial and ideological filters, and they normally receive rigorous review from experts before being formally issued.
   - Key Experts
     Physicians (Physicians are the "key experts" in the medical marijuana debate because the issue is thought by many to be ultimately based on the medical value and risks of marijuana, and Physicians, with their training and clinical work, should, at least in theory, have the best knowledge of marijuana's medical value and risks.) [Note: Key Experts definition varies by sites that have this designation]
   - Experts
     PhDs and JDs (lawyers) with significant post-doctoral involvement in medical marijuana issues, judges who have presided over medical marijuana cases. [Note: Experts definition varies by site]
   - Media and Academic Journals
     Mainstream print, broadcast, radio, and internet media entities such as the New York Times, CNN, ABC News, National Public Radio, Slate.com, Seattlepi.com, etc., as well as influential academic journals such as the Journal of the American Medical Association, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Foreign Policy, etc.
   - Organizations/VIPs/Others
     Individuals and organizations that do not fit into the other star categories.