

Evaluating Web Sites

When researching on the Internet, it is important to ask yourself:

- Is this web site's information reliable and relevant to my research?
- Could I find better information in a book or library database?

Anyone can publish information on the Internet and there is no regulating body to ensure accuracy. In everyday life and especially when conducting academic research, it is imperative that you use the criteria below to evaluate information found on the Internet.

Authority and Sources

- Can you quickly identify the author or creator of the web page?
- What can the web address/URL tell you?

Web Domain Implications

.com, .biz	Commercial site: includes corporations, businesses, or for-profit groups. Information is shared to advertise and persuade. You must decide if the particular site's information outweighs its commercial agenda.
.org	Often not-for-profit sites <i>but not always</i> —there is no overseeing authority to ensure .org addresses go to non-profits. These sites can be owned by non-profit, religious, or lobbying groups, individuals, or companies. Often biased.
.edu	Higher educational sites (domain addresses are regulated).
.gov, .mil, .us	Government sites (domain addresses regulated).
.net	Network-related, often held by Internet service providers.
.uk, .ca., .mx	Country codes indicating sites housed/published outside the United States.

- Is this a personal web page?
 - .edu sites often have personal web pages *not* connected with the institution—look for a tilde (~) and personal name in the web address.
 - Recognize the names of servers that host personal sites (Yahoo, MySpace) and blogs (BlogSpot, WordPress, LiveJournal).
- In the web page, is there an email address to contact the author or publisher? (*Not* the webmaster, web page administrator, or server manager.)
- Can you determine *where* the information was gathered?
 - Original research? Personal editorial or opinion?
 - References, citations, or bibliography listing secondary sources? Try to quickly determine if *those* sources are legitimate or scholarly by their citations.
 - Are there links to other information?
 - Do they represent other viewpoints or lead to biased information sources?
 - Perhaps most importantly, do the links actually work?
 - Has the information been altered from its original source?
- For additional information, check out the UC Berkeley Library [Web Page Evaluation Checklist](#).

Author Credentials

- Determine the authors' credentials:
 - Do the authors research, work, or have post-graduate degrees in the fields in which they are publishing?
 - Have they previously published other well-received works?
 - Does it appear as though the authors are simply hobbyists or "self-proclaimed experts"?

Examples:	Source:	Explanation:
Good authorship:	National Institute of Health: Dwarfism	Information from this site can be trusted. The NIH is an authoritative source (research branch of the US Dept. of Health & Human Services) for objective, accurate, academic information.
Questionable authorship:	Short Persons Support: Dwarfism	Information from this site should be carefully evaluated before use in academic research. While a worthwhile site, it also contains bias, presents information from a specific viewpoint, and often does not cite information sources.

Publisher Credentials

- Have you heard of this entity before?
- If the web page is located on a specific organization's web site, what information can you find about this institution?
 - What is the publisher's mission and purpose and how does that affect the dissemination of this specific information?

Type of Information and Purpose

- Is this information written for a general, trade/field-specific, or academic/research audience?
- What is the purpose of providing this information? (Inform, give facts, persuade, sell, lure, share, disclose etc.)
 - Is the information intended to be educational, business-related, entertaining, persuasive, or to convey personal opinions?
 - Is the author/publisher making an argument for personal gain?
 - Is the writing objective (including all sides of an argument) or subjective (focusing solely on one point of view)?
 - Can you identify any bias in the way the information is presented? (Be wary of your own biases or desire to support your argument; this can cloud your perception of the information you view.) *Note: Just because information contains bias or is presented in a biased manner does not mean that it lacks usefulness, authority, or quality.*

Timeliness/Currency

- When was this material published on the web?
 - Is the information you are seeking time-sensitive or an evolving topic?
 - Is the material/information updated?
- How frequently is the web page itself updated? Is this information available?
- Are the links current or expired?