

Evaluating Web Sites

Why Evaluate Web Sites?

For two very critical reasons:

- Anyone can create his or her Web site and put anything on the Web.
- Unlike traditional print sources, editors or fact-checkers do not check the facts in Web resources to ensure their accuracy. It is up to you to evaluate the accuracy of a Web site.

Basic Criteria for Evaluating Web Sites: Four basic Criteria are used for evaluating Web sites:

Author or Sponsor

- Who is the author of the site? Is it sponsored by an association, business organization, educational institution, government agency, or a person?
- Are the credentials of the author/sponsor given?
- Is contact information given?

Content – Coverage and Objectivity

- What type of information does the site have?
- Is the information contained objective – are all sides of an issue presented?
- Does the site display a bias towards a certain viewpoint?
- Is the information accurate? Can you verify the facts and information presented on the site?
- Is the writing clear, concise, and easy to understand? Are spellings and grammar correct?

Currency

- How current is the information? Was the site updated recently?
- Are the links on the site current?

Structure and Access

- Is the site clearly organized and easy to use?
- Are the directions for finding information easy to understand?
- Does the site load quickly?
- Is the site index in major search engines?

General Rules – (Though there are exceptions of course!)

Web sites with the following domain names are more reliable and accurate:

- .gov – Government web sites
- .edu – Educational web sites
- .org – Non-Profit Associations or Advocacy groups – these may have a specific bias towards a particular topic, viewpoint, or issue.

Some commercial web sites with the .com domain name may be reliable and accurate. For example, <http://www.cnn.com>. Others may just be advertisements for a business or firm.

Personal Web pages are the least reliable of all. These can be put up by anyone and sometimes have the name of the person in the URL address e.g. ~smith

Recommended Links for Evaluating Web Pages

- [Evaluating Web Sites Tutorial](#)
- [Evaluating Information](#) (Try it Yourself!)
- [Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply & Questions to Ask](#)