

## The Web as a Research Tool : Evaluation Criteria

The Internet is a wonderful source of research and entertainment - the problem lies in separating the two. The quality of sources varies tremendously, and since the Internet is not governed, there is no built-in quality control. Here are some criteria to help you evaluate Web resources.

### 1. IDENTIFY THE TYPE OF WEB SITE

#### Is It?

- Entertainment
- Business/Commercial
- Reference/Informational
- News
- Advocacy
- Personal Page

#### Common URLs ending with:

<b>.com</b>	Business/Commercial	<b>.mil</b>	Military
<b>.edu</b>	Educational Institution	<b>.net</b>	Various Types of Networks
<b>.gov</b>	Government-sponsored	<b>.org</b>	Nonprofit Organization

### AUTHORITY/AUTHOR

- Who is the "author"? Is it clear what sponsoring body (organization, etc.) or individual is responsible for the site?
- Does the "author" provide e-mail or a contact address/telephone number?
- Can you verify if the site is "official," actually sponsored/sanctioned by an organization or company?
- What are the "author's" qualifications/credentials?
- Is there a way to verify the legitimacy of this organization/company or individual?

### 3. ACCURACY

- Are the sources for factual information listed so they can be verified in another source?
- How does this information compare with other sources of information on this topic?
- Is the information free of grammatical, spelling and other typographical errors?

### 4. OBJECTIVITY

- Where is the document published? Check the URL domain (.edu, .com, .mil, .gov, .net).
- Has the author or organization clearly stated the goals and/or aims of the site?
- Is there a clear distinction between advertising, opinion, and factual information?
- For a business/commercial site, is it clear what the company's motivation is?
- For a personal home page or organization, are any biases or points of view clearly stated or implied?

## 5. CURRENCY

- a. Are there any dates on the page to indicate the following?
  - when the site was developed
  - the day of the last update
  - how often it is updated
- b. How current are the links? Are there any dead links on the page?
- c. Is any of the information on the page outdated?

## 6. CONTENT

- a. Does the page meet your research needs or purpose?
- b. Is there an indication that the site is complete and not still under construction?
- c. If there is a print equivalent, is it clear if the web version is more or less extensive than the print?
- d. Is the subject adequately covered?
- e. If other sources are quoted, is the information accurately cited?

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### For More Information, see:

"Evaluating Web Pages" (a tutorial module developed by the UC Berkeley Library)  
<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>

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