



EVALUATING WEB SITES

We look many websites each day to fulfill our information needs. But how do we know the information is valid and reliable? What questions should we ask ourselves when evaluating a website?

Purpose

What is the purpose? Can you tell?

The URL is the first place to look to determine if the website is

- commercial (.com)
- organizational (.org)
- governmental (.gov)
- educational (.edu)
- internet provider (.net)
- military (.mil)
- foreign country (ex. .uk)
- personal website (~ appears before name)

Does its purpose affect the content?

Authority

Who authored the site?

Is the person or group an authority on the subject? How do you know?

Is there contact information available?

Are there references or citations listed?

Can you easily identify the authority information?

Bias

What is the website's bias (political, cultural, religious, ethnic, social, etc.)?

Is it obvious or hidden?

How does the bias effect the information?

Currency

How up-to-date is the website?

How frequently is it updated?

How important is it that the information is current?

Are there dead links?

Coverage/Scope

Who is the audience?

Does the site cover a specific period of time or geographical area?

Is the information abridged from another source? If so, who abridged it and why?

Accessibility

Can you easily load the page?

Can you move around the site easily?

Do you have to register to have access?

Are there options for people with disabilities?