

Evaluating Websites

You need to do your assignment using credible research sources but how do you know when information is credible? Never use information that you cannot verify. If you find information that is “too good to be true,” it probably is. Just because you find something on the web doesn’t mean it’s credible, reliable or even true. You should question everything you find on the web with critical thinking.

Determine Authority: If you answer no to any of the questions below or come up with negative information the site is probably not trustworthy.

- Is it clear who is responsible for the information on the site? Go to alexa.com to find out information on the website.
- Is the site a personal page? Is the server a commercial Internet Service Provider?
- What is the domain (.edu, .org, .gov, .com, .mil)
- Is the author well-known and well-regarded? Google the author to find out more about them.
- Is it a name you recognize?
- What do others say about the author?
- Is there biographical information?
- If a company or organization is there a link that describes what they do and the people involved (About Us, Philosophy, Background, Biography)?
- If the information is published by someone else has there been any review of the information?

Determine Accuracy: If you are not satisfied with the answers to the questions below then you might want to find another source.

- Can you easily find who wrote the information?
- Has the information been reproduced from another site? If so are there permissions to reproduce?
- Are claims substantiated? Is there data and an explanation of the research method used?
- Are there linked, cited or footnoted sources to the claims? Is there a bibliography?
- How old is the information? Have there been changes in the field that would make this information obsolete? Is there a publication date on the information?
- Does the author have expertise? What are their qualifications or credentials?
- How does the search engine decide what order information is presented? Has the author paid for placement?

Determine Motivation: You will need to determine the neutrality of the author on the subject

- Is the information biased? Does the information reside on the server of an individual or organization that has a political or philosophical agenda?
- Does the writing seem fair and balanced? Is the information put out by a political organization or an organization that lobbies politicians?
- Are ads clearly separated from the content?

Williams Library, Texas A&M University at Galveston, May 26, 2010

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