

Website Evaluation Guide and Checklist

Searching for quality information on the internet is challenging. Information found on the internet is often not evaluated for quality and accuracy, unlike most print resources such as books and periodicals that go through an evaluation process (e.g. editing, peer review). Anyone can publish almost anything online. This guide features a series of questions that you should ask yourself in order to determine if the information you have found is reliable and should be used as a resource for assignments.

Title of Website: _____
URL: _____
Date evaluated: _____

Evaluation Criteria

Authority

Authority refers to the person, institution or agency responsible for the website.

- ✓ Is there information available about who developed the site?
- ✓ Has the creator stated their qualifications, credentials, or provided some personal background information?
- ✓ Are there any qualifications or affiliations given? If not, how can you find out more about the author?
- ✓ Has the creator provided contact information including: address, phone number and email?
- ✓ Is the site supported by an organization or a commercial body?
- ✓ Are the topics explored in depth?



Tip: Look for a biography, or other background information often listed under an "About Us"

Currency

It is important to know if the website you're looking at is current.

- ✓ Is the website dated to indicate when it was created?
- ✓ Is the date the information was posted on the website given?
- ✓ Is the date the website or information last revised given?
- ✓ Is there a copyright date listed?
- ✓ Is the site fully developed? (E.g. are pages under construction).
- ✓ If references are listed, are they current and from a credible source?



Tip: Follow the links. Do they work or are they outdated/dead links?

Purpose

The purpose of the website or of the information presented in the site.

- ✓ Does the URL of the site indicate its purpose?
- ✓ Does the content of the website support its purpose?
- ✓ Is the site focused and well organized?
- ✓ Who is the intended audience?
- ✓ Is the information intended to inform, educate, persuade, sell, advocate or entertain?
- ✓ Are the links appropriate for the topic of the site?

Accuracy

Evaluate the information being presented on the website.

- ✓ Is proper spelling and grammar used?
- ✓ Is the information on the website comparable to other sites on the same topic?
- ✓ If the author is affiliated with a known institution? Is that institution reliable?
- ✓ Is there a bibliography or reference list included?
- ✓ If statistics or other facts are used, do they include proper references?
- ✓ Does the site provide its own information or does it rely mainly on outside links?



Tip: Do some background reading on the topic you are researching. Check other sources to compare. Is the information verifiable?

Objectivity

Objective sites will present information without bias, and without the intention to persuade.

- ✓ Is the information biased? Is it designed to sway the opinion of the reader?
- ✓ Is the creator or author advertising or trying to sell something?
- ✓ Is the site sponsored by the government, an educational institution, a company or an organization that may have an agenda? (Look for the domain name at the end of the URL, E.g. .edu, .gov, .com, .ca or .org.)
- ✓ Does the site claim to be comprehensive



Tip: Be aware of the tone of the writing. Look for strongly worded assertions.

Access

Evaluate access to the website.

- ✓ Is the website free or is there a fee for usage?
- ✓ Do you have to register in order to use the site, even if there is no charge?
- ✓ Is the site stable or is it often too busy to access?
- ✓ Does the website take a long time to load? Are there any particular software or hardware requirements?
- ✓ Is it easy to read and navigate?
- ✓ Is it arranged clearly, logically and usefully?

Overall Opinion of the Website

Given all the information you determined from the above, do you feel the website is appropriate for your research project or information requirement? The more times you answered yes to these questions, the more likely the page is a reliable source.

Learn more about evaluating internet resources:

The Learning Portal – College Libraries Ontario: Search the Web

<http://tlp-lpa.ca/research/search-the-web>

Dalhousie University: Website Checklist

<https://libraries.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/library/CoreSkills/Website%20Checklist.pdf>

Widener University: Evaluate Web Pages Tutorial

http://www.widener.edu/about/campus_resources/wolfgram_library/evaluate/