

Website Evaluation for High School Research

Authority: Who is taking responsibility for the information? If you can't figure it out, do not use the website. Use the following links: "About Us," "FAQ," "Background," etc. You may need to do a little digging to find an author's credentials or other publications. "Google" the author if necessary.

| | YES | NO |
|--|-----|----|
| Is the website sponsor or institution clearly identified? | | |
| Is there an author identified? | | |
| If there is an author, has he or she provided contact information (name, email or physical address, phone number)? | | |

Purpose: Looking at the URL of a site will help you decide its purpose. Is its purpose to entertain, inform, generate profit?

| | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Based on its domain (.com, .edu, .gov, .org) have you looked over the website carefully? Different domains serve different purposes: blogs often use .org and may be biased; .gov websites provide facts, data, and statistics; .coms will have a lot of ads so assess them carefully; education entities are associated with .edu but make sure it is a legitimate academic institution. | | |
| Does the website avoid trying to persuade or sell you something? (bias) | | |
| Is the information on the site relevant to your needs? | | |

Objectivity: The author and/or organization presenting the information will help you determine the website's usefulness. Make sure it's not trying to manipulate your point of view.

| | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Does the website avoid advertising that may be a conflict of interest with its content? | | |
| If a controversial issue is presented, are both perspectives addressed? | | |
| Do you trust the author or organization associated with the website? | | |

Accuracy: Anyone can create and publish a website. Ask yourself these questions to determine if the information presented is verifiable.

| | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Based on your prior research and reading, does the information presented on the site seem accurate? | | |
| Is factual information referenced or presented as "further readings" or "resources?" | | |
| Are there few spelling and grammar mistakes? | | |
| Are there additional links to other reliable websites? | | |

Currency: We want information that is up-to-date.

| | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| Does the information have a copyright date? | | |
| Does the website have a date associated with its creation or most recent update? | | |
| Is currency important considering your topic? | | |
| Does the site have any broken links? Broken links may mean the site has been abandoned and not regularly updated. | | |

When in doubt, ask!