



Evaluating Websites



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Evaluating Web Sites

- After using a web search engine, i.e. Google, and selecting a website, look for the following items to evaluate the validity & accuracy of said website:
 - Author
 - Accuracy
 - Purpose & Content
 - Currency
 - Usability
- Then ask yourself the following questions:

Author

- Who is the author or webmaster?
 - What organization do they work for or represent?
- Does the site provide contact information?
 - Does the website provide links to a Mission Statement, About Us, or Who We Are, page?
- Is any of this information readily visible or easy to locate?

Accuracy

- Does the author cite his/her sources?
- Are the references easily located?
- Can the information be deemed reliable?
- Can the information be verified by another, outside source?

Purpose & Content

- **Use the following questions to determine the purpose & content of a website.**
 - Does the site provide objective, factual information, or biased, opinionated statements?
 - If opinion, is it presented in a direct manner?
 - Is the site selling a product or service?
 - If so does it have a direct relation as to why the site was created?
 - Are there many spelling errors?
 - Is slang language or jargon overused?
 - Are chat abbreviations used?

Currency

- Ask yourself the following to evaluate the currency of a website.
 - When was the site created?
 - When was the site last updated or revised?
 - Is any of this information prominently displayed in the website?
 - How up-to-date are the hyperlinks?
 - Do all of the hypertext links work?

Usability

- What is the site's overall appearance?
 - Site organization?
 - Easy to read?
 - Easy to navigate?
 - Easy to use?
 - HELP pages?
 - Are they available?
 - Are they understandable?
 - If the site is a large one, is there a search capability?
 - Is it easy to use?

Internet Domain Extensions

- .gov - a government body
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov>
- .ca - country or state codes
<http://www.medbd.ca.gov/>
- .edu - educational institution, used in the U.S.
<http://www.westernu.edu>

Internet Domain Extensions

- .org - organization that *may be* non-profit
<http://www.redcross.org>
- .net - A top-level domain name used for Internet administrative sites in the United States. <http://www.microsoft.net>
- .com - a commercial enterprise
<http://www.medscape.com>

What domain extension mean

- When looking through result lists the following extensions **can** carry more credibility.
 - .gov
 - .edu
 - .org
 - Carefully review .org sites, looking for information about the organization involved.
- All other sites should be carefully evaluated before relying on the information provided.

Putting everything together

- If the author, or organization, is ambiguous or doesn't provide information about themselves.
- If the author doesn't cite their sources.
- References
 - Aren't provided or are inaccurate.
- The purpose of the website isn't clearly defined or stated.

Putting everything together

- They are selling site specific information or products.
- The site is out of date or many of the links don't work.
- The site looks cluttered and/or disorganized.
- Check the domain extension type.
 - If .com, .net, or .org take a more a critical look at the website..

The end result

- If you can't easily find the answer to one or more of previous statements.
 - Seek information from a different, more reliable website or resource.
 - Consider using a database.
 - PubMed or something similar.

Need more help

- Contact the Pumerantz Library Reference Department
 - 909-469-5323
 - Ask for Reference
 - Email
 - Ask a Librarian email help