

# ***EVALUATING INTERNET RESOURCES***

Is the internet fun? Yes. Is the internet a good tool for research? Yes, but.....

Great care should be taken when doing research on the Internet. Freedom of publication in the cyberspace is what makes the internet such a wonderful as well as powerful resource. This means that anybody can put anything on the Net at any time and that search results may have widely varying degrees of quality and reliability.

Learning to evaluate Internet resources will help increase the quality and efficiency of your time spent online. Use the following questions to help determine the quality and reliability of a site.

## **PURPOSE**

Is the purpose clearly stated?

Is the Web page trying to inform, persuade, explain or sell something?

Who is the intended audience – subject experts, general public, or school students?

## **CONSIDER THE AUTHOR / SOURCE**

Is the author identifiable?

Are his /her credentials (education, training, experience, position, title) listed?

Is there a way to contact the author?

What institution or organization is the person affiliated with?

Is there a way to contact the author?

Is he or she speaking for him/herself or as an official representative?

[Note the difference between 1) “Brian Jones, employee of the Food & Drug Administration, says that sugar cures obesity, and 2) “The Food & Drug Administration said today, according to spokesperson Brian Jones, that sugar cures obesity.”]

If the source is an association or organization, is it known and respected?

Check the domain name in the URL. – generally a good clue about source and reliability

.edu = education organization

.com = commercial organization

.org = non-profit organization

.gov = governmental organization

.net = network related

.mil = military

two-letter code = country of origin (ex.: uk = United Kingdom)

NOTE: Commercial sites may be selling something, educational sites range from forums for sophomoric humor to cutting edge research, non-profits may be professional associations or frivolous groups, etc.

## **ACCURACY**

Is the text well written or does it contain misspellings and bad grammar?

Is the information fact or opinion?

Every writer has an opinion and wants to prove his point.

- Fact can be proven and verified by other documents or witnesses.
- Is the information reasonable and balanced?  
Watch out for ambiguity (double meanings, puns) innuendo, manipulative reasoning, slant (bias), exaggeration, and intemperate tone or language (“stupid jerks”, “shrill cries of their extremist opponents”)
- Is the information reasonable and balanced?  
Does the writer maintain his objectivity?  
The information should never contradict itself nor should it contain any fallacies or conflicts of interest.
- Does the information compare with the other information you’ve found?  
Are assumptions and arguments supported by the data?
- Is the information comprehensive?  
Does it just cover one aspect of a topic or all aspects of it?  
How deep does it get?
- Are sources of information clearly stated, whether original or borrowed from elsewhere?  
Are all links relevant and appropriate? Do they work?

## CURRENCY

- When was the site last revised?  
If this date is not evident in site itself, check the menu bar – *view: document info*.  
Avoid the site if there isn’t any date or if it is an old date on information known to change quickly.
- How frequently is the resource updated or is it a static resource?  
Some work is timeless like classic novels or the philosophical works of Plato.  
Some work has limited useful life because of advances within its field (ex. : nursing)
- Does the site contain clearly dated information such as “1900 U.S. Census?”

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