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## Evaluating Web Resources

When searching the Web for academic information, it is important to evaluate every website you look at to determine if the information is acceptable for college-level research. Evaluating websites for academic worth is not an exact science, but with the help of evaluation criteria, the task can be made easier. Use the criteria found below when doing research on the Internet to determine if potential information sources should be used.

### Evaluation Criteria

#### **Currency: The timeliness of the Web page**

- If relevant, when was the information gathered
- When was it posted
- When was it last revised
- Are the links functional and up-to-date
- Is there evidence of newly added information or links

#### **Relevance/Coverage: The uniqueness of the content and its importance to you**

- What is the depth and breadth of the information presented
- Is the information unique
- Could you find the same or better information in another source
- Who is the intended audience; is it easily determined
- Does the site provide the information you need
- Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper

#### **Authority: The source of the Web page**

- Who is the author/creator/sponsor
- Are the author's credentials listed
- Is the author a teacher or student of the topic
- Does the author have a reputation
- Is there contact information
- Has the author published works in traditional formats
- Is the author affiliated with an organization
- Does the organization support or sponsor the page
- What does the domain name (URL) reveal about the source (.com, .edu, .gov, .org, .net, .com)

#### **Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the information**

- Where does the information come from
- Are the original sources listed
- Can you verify any of the information in other ways (i.e. other sources or experience)
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed
- Is the language or tone biased
- Are there spelling, grammatical, or other typographical errors

### **Purpose/Objectivity: Why does the Web site exist/Is it biased or prejudiced**

- Are biases clearly stated
- Is there a clear line between advertising content and informational content
- Are the editorials clearly distinguishable
- Is the purpose of the page stated
- What is the purpose of the page (teach, entertain, sell, persuade)
- What does the domain name (URL) reveal about the information (.com, .edu, gov, .org, .net)

### **Other things to keep in mind**

**Web Design:** Look at the style and functionality of the Web site, layout, navigation, appearance, etc.

The one key thing to remember here is that “Appearances can be deceiving.” Just because it’s “pretty” and has a lot of “glitz” does not necessarily mean the content is useful and accurate. Also look at how well the website is laid out. Can you easily navigate through it and find the links.

### **Check the Links:**

A site that has accurate, relevant, well-organized links indicates a site that is well maintained and evaluated on a regular basis by the creator.

### **Accessing the Site:**

Is there a fee charged for access, is it compatible with your browser, and are there software/hardware requirements. This may not necessarily affect the content of the site, but it could affect the ability to access it.