

A Guide for Evaluating the Reliability of Internet Resources



The Internet is sometimes compared to a transportation system with millions of destinations and many ways to get to from one place to another. The destinations are advertised as wonderful places to visit, and many are just that. However, there are also sites that need to be considered with caution.

If you or your students are using the Internet, how can you tell which sites are worth visiting and which ones should be avoided? The Internet has very valuable information, but some of it is also misleading and erroneous. With the huge amount of information available, it is important that students and teachers learn how to critically evaluate a site and not just accept that the information is true because it is on the Internet.



Here are some guides to help you and your students evaluate the quality and reliability of Internet sites. (Not all of the guides will be applicable to each site.)

Content Validity



- Is the purpose of the site stated and easy to locate?
- Does the site link to other external sites or only to itself?
- Are sources of information cited?
- Is the information current?
- Does the information include biases such as personal opinions, political, religious, or cultural references? Some organizations advocate only one side of an issue such as abortion or smoking.
- Is the information a disguised commercial advertisement? Examples include citizenship pages sponsored by legal offices or publishers who have lesson materials online that are written for just their products.
- Does the information contradict something you found somewhere else?
- Can you verify the information in a traditional source?
- Has the site won any awards? Most sites display their awards. Not all awards necessarily have the same value.



Authority



- Who is the sponsor of the site? (Search BetterWhois.com to see who really owns the Website.)
- Was the site developed by an educational institution, a business, or a corporation? (look at the domain ie. .org, .edu, .gov, or .com)
- Who is the author and is there a way to contact him/her?
- Is there a biography with the author's credentials?

Technical Aspects



- Are all the links active? (Indicates that the site is maintained)
 - Does the page load quickly?
 - Is the site easy to navigate?
 - Is the site available as in a text-only format so that it is handicap accessible?
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Sources Consulted

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