

EVALUATING WEBSITES

Why is it important to evaluate Internet sites?

Most books and journals are viewed and edited before publication. However, anybody can put anything on the Internet, so not every site is trustworthy or reliable. **Before you use information from a website, it is essential that you EVALUATE that website!** The checklist, below, contains some questions you should be asking when trying to establish the appropriateness and quality of the information you find online.

Checklist of questions to help you evaluate Internet sites:

1. SCOPE AND COVERAGE

- Is the site relevant to your needs?
- How in depth is the material?
- How does the web site compare to other information sources on the topic?

2. AUTHOR OR SPONSORING ORGANIZATION

- Who is the author of the page or site?
- Is there a way to contact the site's creator?
- What is the authority or expertise of the site's creator?
- Is there any bias?

3. CURRENCY

- When was the site created?
- When was the site last updated? Was it updated recently? (*Information about a website's currency is usually at the bottom of the webpage*)

4. ACCURACY

- Is the information reliable and free of errors (typos, grammatical errors)?
- Is there an editor or someone who checks the information?
- Are the links working?

(Warning signs of a lack of accuracy: -author's name missing -no date on the document or anywhere on the site -broad or vague statements with no supporting documentation - information that changes rapidly has not been updated)

5. PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

- What is the site's purpose? (To sell something? to educate? to entertain?)
- Is the page written for children? Adults? Scholars?
- Is the content appropriate for the intended audience?

6. PRESENTATION

- How is the site organized?
- Is it easy to find your way around within the site?
- Is the information presented clearly?