

<b>Be a Source Detective</b>	<b>Student/Class Goal</b> Students want to know how to find reliable and accurate sources when researching.
<b>Outcome</b> <i>(lesson objective)</i> Students will acquire an understanding of how to evaluate sources when researching.	<b>Time Frame</b> 3-4 hours
<b>Standard</b> <i>Convey Ideas in Writing</i>	<b>NRS EFL</b> 5-6
<b>Activity Addresses Benchmarks</b> <i>(content)</i> Primary Benchmarks W.5.6, W.6.6 Supporting Benchmarks W.5.5, W.6.5, W.5.7, W.6.7, W.5.8, W.6.8, W.5.9, W.6.9	
<b>Materials</b> Laptop, LCD projector, Internet access Computer Lab w/Internet access <i>Transitions Preparing for College Writing</i> . Steck-Vaughn, 17. <i>What Do You Think About It?</i> Handout <i>Write for College-Student Handbook</i> . Houghton Mifflin, 322-323. 3 x 5 notecards <i>Using Index Cards for Researching</i> Handout <i>Evaluating Print Sources</i> Jigsaw Handout <i>ABCs of Website Evaluation</i> Jigsaw Handout <i>Evaluating Web Sites</i> Jigsaw Handout <i>Evaluating Websites</i> Jigsaw Handout <i>Five Criteria for Evaluating Websites</i> Jigsaw Handout <i>Five Ws of Evaluation</i> Jigsaw Handout <i>Quality Information Checklist</i> Jigsaw Handout	
<b>Learner Prior Knowledge</b> Students have practiced using the writing process in completing several written essays. They have used several different methods of organization. Students have performed searches, researched several topics, and know how to correctly cite sources and avoid plagiarism.	
<b>Instructional Activities</b> Step 1 - Review <i>Transitions Preparing for College Writing</i> p. 17 to take a pro or con stand on a list of issues. Students choose one that they feel very strong about for their next essay topic. If book is unavailable, another option is to use the <i>What Do You Think About It?</i> handout.  Step 2 - Use issue "Should the fuel efficiency of American automobiles be increased?" to create together a strong pro thesis statement. Review classroom resources listed and discuss credibility of sources.  Demonstrate evaluating sources by researching this thesis statement together. Model citing sources for students using the index card method. See also <i>Using Index Cards for Researching</i> handout. Students take turns assisting with this as whole group researches together. Hold the notes for later.  <b>Teacher Note</b> Engage all students in class research activity.  Step 3 - As a jigsaw activity, groups of students read and highlight:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluating Print Sources</li> <li>• ABC's of Website Evaluation</li> <li>• Evaluating Websites</li> <li>• Evaluating Websites</li> </ul>	

- Five Criteria for Evaluating Websites
- Five W's of Evaluation
- Quality Information Checklist

Then, groups are redesigned with a representative from each former group. Each shares findings from the former group with the new group. Then, as a whole class, discuss the pitfalls that we have come across together as the class researched today. Discuss what students have witnessed in their past researching and predict what they might anticipate with the topic they have chosen this time.

Step 4 - Students write a strong thesis statement for the issue they chose in Step 1. In pairs, students assist and provide feedback to each other.

Step 5 - Circulate and assist in the computer lab as students work on researching their chosen topic, using the index card method. Students gather in classroom upon completion of research to mention any issues they found with evaluating sources.

Step 6 - Review *Transitions Preparing for College Writing* p. 16 explaining to students how to effectively fit their research notes into their essay. Again, you may also use the *Using Index Cards for Researching* handout. Transition back to Step 2 and model for students as you refer back to whole class research activity and demonstrate how to sort cards (each note card has source # marked on it for footnote and bibliography purposes) and fit research notes into essay.

Step 7 - Students now have a chance to write a draft and practice this skill for themselves with their own individual research notes. Partners read and provide feedback as students revise and edit.

Step 8 - Students complete final essay and submit.

**Assessment/Evidence** *(based on outcome)*

Essay with information from research

**Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation**

*This lesson has not yet been field tested.*

**Next Steps**

Continue to evaluate sources of information in reading and writing activities.

**Technology Integration**

Jigsaw Teaching Strategy [http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/jigsaw\\_groups09.pdf](http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/strategies/jigsaw_groups09.pdf)

Evaluating Print Sources <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/evidence.html#1>

ABC's of Website Evaluation [http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/pdf/weval\\_02.pdf](http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/pdf/weval_02.pdf)

Evaluating Websites [http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating\\_web.html](http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating_web.html)

Evaluating Websites <http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/>

Five Criteria for Evaluating Websites <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/print/4499>

Five W's of Evaluation <http://kathyschrock.net/abceval/5ws.htm>

Quality Information Checklist <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/menu.htm>



## **What Do You Think About It?**

- 1. Students should be expelled if caught cheating.**
- 2. Gays should not be permitted to serve in the military.**
- 3. All citizens should be required to vote.**
- 4. Overpopulation is the main reason for poverty.**
- 5. Use of cell phones should be illegal when driving.**
- 6. Professional athletes should act as role models for children.**
- 7. Your financial history should not affect your employment chances.**
- 8. Recycling is important for our environment.**

# Using Index Cards for Researching

## Sample Bibliography Card

#2
<b>Bornstein, David</b>
<b>How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas</b>
<b>Oxford UP</b>
<b>New York, 20004</b>

## Sample Note Card

#2
<b>Problems related to overpopulation</b>
<b>--Widespread hunger</b>
<b>--Not enough health care</b>
<b>--Poor education</b>
<b>--Unchanging poverty</b>
<b>--High crime rates</b>
<b>--Damaged environment</b>
<b>How to Change the World p.2</b>

# Evaluating Print Sources

Source: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/evidence.html#1>

## What this handout is about

This handout will discuss strategies to evaluate secondary printed sources—books, journal articles, magazines, etc.—based on three criteria: objectivity, authority, and applicability to your particular assignment. Printed sources, whether primary or secondary, provide the evidence for most of the academic essays you will write in college. Non-print sources, such as webpages, works of art (performance and fine), and interviews often provide significant source material for analysis but are not covered in this handout.

## Introduction

At some point in your college career, you will be asked to write a research paper. While you may associate research papers with history or political science classes, the study of most disciplines involves the collection and interpretation of data with the intent of making and supporting an argument. To do this, you must use some printed texts, whether they are primary documents or secondary sources that analyze primary sources.

If you have never written a research paper at the college level, the process may appear daunting. The first step, of course, is to develop a topic that investigates a problem important to your discipline. For this, talk to your instructor or the library Reference staff and check out our handouts on understanding assignments, constructing thesis statements, and argument in academic writing.

So you come up with a good idea and head to the library to begin research. UNC's Davis Library contains over five million books and journals. Which ones are useful to your study? What if the information they present is false, outdated, or biased to the point of inaccuracy? How can you tell? This handout will help answer these questions.

Researchers approach an unfamiliar source and ask questions of it with the intention of discovering clues that will tell them if they can trust the source and if it can add anything to the argument. The steps that are outlined below may appear drawn-out and perfunctory to some; each step is outlined in detail so that both novice and advanced researchers can benefit. It will help you approach your sources more carefully and critically.

## Primary and secondary sources

This handout will focus on how to evaluate secondary sources, but the critical skills you learn here will help in analyzing primary sources too. Before we can get to secondary sources, we need to differentiate primary from secondary sources. Primary sources come in various shapes and sizes, and often you have to do a little bit of research about the source to make sure you have correctly identified it.

In a nutshell, a primary source was produced at the same time that the events described in the source took place. Sound easy? In most cases it is. Here are some examples and problem areas:

**Diaries** and **letters** written by people who were participants in the actions they describe are easy to classify as primary sources, but what about **memoirs** or **autobiographies**? These are usually written well after the events took place and often will tell you more about the period in which they were written than about the period they describe.

What about **newspapers**? The author of an article presents an interpretation, but if the article reports current events, it is primary. If the article reports past events, it is secondary. Keep in mind that an article about a past event can present valuable primary evidence concerning the author's context.

What about **fiction**? If you are studying the novel or poem for its own sake, it is a primary source. If you are using the novel or poem as evidence—a historical novel, for example—it is a secondary source. In the same vein, a 19th-century **history textbook** can be considered a primary source if you are studying how the work was influenced by the period in which it was written or how it fits into a continuum of historical analysis (that is called historiography).

Check out this table to help differentiate primary and secondary sources.

Primary	Secondary
<i>The Tempest</i> by William Shakespeare	An article that analyzes the motif of the 'savage other' in <i>The Tempest</i> .
<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>	A book about the Holocaust
The Declaration of Independence	A biography of Thomas Jefferson
Population statistics on Ethiopia from <i>The World Factbook</i>	An article titled "The impact of population growth on infant mortality in Ethiopia."

Secondary sources will inform most of your writing in college. You will often be asked to research your topic using primary sources, but secondary sources will tell you which primary sources you should use and will help you interpret those primary sources. To use them well, however, you need to think critically about them.

There are two parts of a source that you need to analyze: the text itself and the argument within the text.

## Evaluating the text

You evaluate a text to determine the objectivity of the author and the credibility of the work. Do not assume that your sole motive or goal is to eliminate sources. While this may be a consequence of your analysis, your goal should be to understand the context of the work so you can assess how it can inform your argument. To do this, you must analyze the text according to three criteria: the author, the publisher, and the date of publication.

### Author

Remember back at the beginning of this handout I wrote that critically analyzing sources is all about asking questions? Well, here is where you show off that skill. The next time you pick up a book in the library, look at the author's name. Have you heard of her? Do you know if he is cited in other books on the subject? Has your instructor mentioned the author's name? Is she affiliated with a university (which may or may not add to her authority)? Does the author acknowledge an organizational affiliation? The acknowledgements and preface are good places to get the answers to most of these questions.

### Publisher

The questions you will ask about the publisher are similar to those asked about the author. Look in the first few pages of the book for the copyright and publisher information. Did a university press—for example, UNC Press, UT Press—publish the text? Did a popular press—Jones and Bartlett, Harcourt, Brace,

Jovanovich—publish it? You can be relatively sure that if a university press published the book, it has been held to a high academic standard. Popular presses differ in their standards. You may have to look at other aspects of the book (see below for tips on identifying tone and audience) or look at other books produced by the same publisher to judge the credibility of the text. Remember, you are not looking for ways to exclude works. Rather, you are trying to understand the context in which the book was written so you can better analyze its content.

## **Date of Publication**

If you are researching a current issue, it stands to reason that you want the most up-to-date sources you can find. If your topic is not so current, it is often acceptable to go back ten or even twenty years for your sources. If there is a more recent book on the same topic, make sure that you look at it. Maybe the author found new evidence that drastically alters the argument of the first book. The age of a work can be easy to determine, but it is sometimes tricky. The page that has all the publisher's information has a copyright date. Has the work been translated? If so, that date is probably the date of the translation. Is there more than one date listed on the page? In that case, you probably have a newer edition. If so, the author wrote most of the book at the time of the first date of publication, although new information may have been added since then.

## **Objectivity**

After analyzing the text, you may find some bias. That does not mean you should discard it. Perhaps the author thanks an anti-homosexual religious organization for funding his research on same-sex marriages. You may be tempted to toss the book aside because you feel that a biased work will not provide the 'facts.' But you may be missing out on some good evidence. No secondary work is going to give you the 'facts.' Secondary sources provide interpretations of primary data. Every interpretation is influenced by the author's context. Find out where the author is coming from and use the evidence accordingly. For example, the book about same-sex marriages funded by the Southern Baptist Convention may provide a clear presentation of the conservative side of the issue. Paired with a book that provides a liberal interpretation, the conservative book may provide valuable information about the various positions within the discussion.

## **Evaluating an argument**

Analyzing the author, publisher, and age of the text provides a good place to start your analysis. You should not stop there, however. You have to move beyond the appraisal of the text and begin to analyze the content. To do this, you can use the same technique of asking questions and searching for responses.

## **Applicability**

Is the work applicable to your study? The first place to look for answers is the table of contents. A book can have a great title but then can be full of tangential ideas or take an approach that simply may not add to your study. The next place to check out is the index. The index is a wonderful resource for researchers. You can use it to quickly jump to particular passages if your topic is well defined. More often, you'll scan the index to get a feel for the authority and scope of the text. Often you can learn most of what a book can tell you by reading the preface and the introduction and scanning the table of contents and index.

## **Argument**

Analyzing the argument gets to the heart of a critical approach to your sources. While this task may seem daunting at first, here are some tips and techniques you can learn to make it a lot easier.

- Is the information supported by evidence? Take a good look at the footnotes or endnotes. What kinds of sources did the author use? Does the bibliography mention the important books in the field?
- What is the major claim or thesis of the book or article? Is it clear what the author is trying to prove?
- What are the primary assumptions on which the author bases the argument's main claim? Do you agree with those assumptions? Is the author taking too much liberty in making those assumptions?
- Check out the Book Review Index in the Reference section of the library. Read what other scholars have written about this book. Are the reviews generally positive? Do they consider the book useful or important to the field? This is not considered cheating. On the contrary, it will enable you to read the book with your eyes open, so to speak.

## **Audience**

An analysis of the audience can tell you a lot about how much authority a book or article can claim. Most of what you uncovered in your analysis of the text will inform your judgment of the intended audience. You can find out more by looking at how the book is written and what type of format it is written in. Is the work full of technical terms or graphs? Then the audience may be academic. Is the language very simple with lots of pictures? Then the audience may be a younger crowd, or the book may be intended for light reading. If you are reading a newspaper or magazine, look at the advertisements. Who does the publisher hope will read the source? An advertisement for Lexus automobiles or Johnny Walker Red scotch in "Newsweek" may indicate a wealthy, educated (and possibly male) audience. An advertisement in "People" for Tommy Hilfiger or Pepsi may indicate a different audience.

## **Tone**

The tone of a book is how the author represents himself or herself through language. Strong and impassioned language may indicate to you that the author is too emotionally connected to the work to provide an objective analysis. Most academic authors try to appear impartial in their writing by always writing in the third person and staying away from loaded adjectives. Here are some questions you can ask about the author's tone:

- Does the author's language seem impartial to you? Are wild claims made? Is a lot of emotional language used?
- Does the author remain focused on the argument? Does he or she jump from point to point without completing any thoughts?
- Does the author seem objective? Does the information appear to be propaganda to you? Is a specific agenda put forth through the selection of data or the manipulation of evidence? Remember, finding a bias does not necessarily mean you should discard the book. Take it in stride and use it accordingly.

## **Authority**

Answers to all the questions posed above will help you determine whether you can accept a source as an authority. Can you trust it? What can you trust about it? There is no easy way to answer that question, but by carefully approaching both the text and the argument you can feel more confident about the source.

## **Following the trail**



It may happen that you come up with a topic and go to the library to find sources. You sit down with ten books that you gleaned from a keyword search on the library's online catalog. You put all ten books through the critical analysis steps outlined above, and only one fits all your criteria. What do you do now? Go back to the library catalog? Browse the shelves near where you found the first ten? Those methods may work, but a quicker way is to follow the trail of sources in the one book you have decided to use. Look at the footnotes and bibliography. Note titles that the author relies on or refers to as pillars of the discipline. Then look up those book or articles in the library catalog and begin the critical analysis process all over again. This time, however, you know what one author thinks about the book, so it already has achieved a level of authority or importance. Following the trail from one book or article to others can lead to an understanding of the entire structure of the literature on a particular topic.

## Apply what you've learned

Now that you know the key terms and what questions to ask, put your newfound knowledge to the test. What questions would you ask of this handout?

- Is the author an authority?
- Is the author biased?
- Can I learn anything from this handout?

How would you go about finding out the answers to these questions? For the first question, go to the UNC Writing Center Homepage. There you will find out who funds the Writing Center and who works there. The answer to the second question is yes, I do have biases, although I am probably not aware of all of them. Do they affect what I write? Of course. Is that necessarily bad? Of course not. The answer to the third question is more difficult. There is no table of contents because this is a short work, but the bold section breaks and bulleted lists should help you scan the document for applicability. Everyone approaches a learning situation from a different angle, and what is useful to one person might not be for the next. That is an assessment you must make from your own perspective.

Don't forget to follow the trail of this handout to continue thinking about these ideas: check out the list below.

## Works consulted

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout's topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the UNC Libraries citation tutorial.

Booth, Wayne C., et al. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Ede, Lisa. *Work in Progress: A Guide to Academic Writing and Revising*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2001.

<http://www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/skill26.htm>

[http://www.lib.calpoly.edu/infocomp/modules/05\\_evaluate/index.html](http://www.lib.calpoly.edu/infocomp/modules/05_evaluate/index.html)

<http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/infosrv/lue/evalu.html>



## Teaching Media Literacy in the Age of the Internet

The online world is quickly becoming a source of primary information for both teachers and students. Considering the enormous amount of information available online and that about 75% of all K-12 schools have Internet access, students and teachers need to be able to critically evaluate Web pages for authenticity, applicability, authorship, bias, and usability.

Unlike the media center, there are no media specialists to sort out the valuable information from the substandard information. With more than 350 million documents available on the Web alone, finding relevant information online can be daunting. Therefore, the ability to critically evaluate information is an invaluable skill in this information age.

The acquisition of digital literacy skills is dependent upon the student's ability to find information, determine its usefulness and accuracy, and utilize it effectively. What follows are 26 criteria that enable teachers and students to assess every Web page the Net has to offer.

**Authority** When we look at Internet information with a critical eye, we want to know the basis of the author's authority. Some filters we can employ are:

- Is the author a well-regarded name you recognize? • Does the online document contain a biography and an email address?
- Did you link to this site from a site you trust?
- Are you led to additional information about the author?

<http://www.amazon.com>

**Bias** Biased sites contain words that try to persuade rather than inform. Some of these words include over-generalizations and simplifications and may also contain games, giveaways, contests, or celebrity endorsements intended to persuade. Some things to think about include:

- Is it clear what organization is sponsoring the page?
- Is there is a link to the sponsoring organization's Web site?
- Is the page actually an ad disguised as information?

**Citations** If the author of a site includes a source bibliography, students can consult these sources to find additional information about the topic and compare the author's content

## The ABCs of Web Site Evaluation

with other works. If the author leads the user to related sources, it allows the student to evaluate the author's scholarship. Citations should be full citations to allow students to locate the book or periodical at the library.

**Dates** Every credible Web site includes the date that it was created and the date of last update. Another date that may be important to your students is the date the data was collected. Students need to ask themselves if the information they are looking for is from an area that demands more current information. In this case, the date of last update is an important feature to look for.

**Efficiency** If you plan to use a site with a large group of students, it is important to try it at all times of day. Some sites get very busy at midday and may slow down your lesson. If there are large graphics on the page, make sure the page resides in your cache to speed up the download time. If you are planning a major lesson around a site, the best idea is to ask permission from the site's author and use WebWhacker or WebBuddy to retrieve the entire site or a portion of it to your computer.

<http://www.bluesquirrel.com/whacker/>

<http://www.dataviz.com/products/webbuddy/>

**Fallacy** As with print material, one thing that may happen on a Web site is that the information presented may be used out of context. Citations allow students to research the original

document and become familiar with the surrounding text. Another event that occurs on the Web that is unique to hypertext systems is the ability to jump into a Web site at any point. Students should be encouraged to find the "top" of the Web site and read the author's purpose and rationale for providing the information.

**Graphics** As bandwidth shrinks and becomes a precious commodity, more attention needs to be focused on the graphics that are included on a Web site. A clearly labeled graphic is worth a thousand words when illustrating a point. Graphics should aid students in reaching the desired objectives for using the site and should serve a clear purpose for the intended audience.

**Handicapped Access** In this day of the graphical browser, the statement that a page should be usable via a text-based browser is often disregarded. Visually impaired users may utilize a screen reader to read the Web page, and it is important that there be text available and text alternatives for the graphics software to "read." (See <http://bobby.cast.org/>)

**Information Availability** Tell students that a particular piece of information might not be available online because firms who pay to create and disseminate information are unlikely to provide this information free of charge. Also tell students that keeping "Digital literacy is the ability to

**Jerry-Built** *Webster's Dictionary* defines jerry-built as "built poorly, of cheap materials." When evaluating a site, students need to understand that a page that contains multiple spelling and grammatical errors may have been thrown together. There is one exception: If the native language of the Web site designer is not English, spelling and grammar inconsistencies should be overlooked.

**Knowledge** Before researching online, students should have working knowledge of the topics they are pursuing. This allows students to relate how the new information compares with what they already know about the subject.

**Links** Students should also try to find out if a site is meant to be comprehensive in scope or is just an overview or sampler of links. The links should be appropriate for the site's intended audience and also offer something that is not available at any other online destination.

**Misinformation** Students need to realize some of the sources of misinformation on the Net, which include the fact there is nothing to stop a Web page author from modifying the text at any time; the use of opinion verbs and appeals to emotion may indicate bias; and there are many jokes and pranks on the Net.

**Navigability** A Web page should be designed for easy navigation. Links should be easy to identify and grouped in

some type of logical order. Students should be able to tell at first glance how a site is organized and the options available. An added bonus is the inclusion of a keyword search function.

**Online Research Models** There are numerous research models available that are applicable to the online research process. They all have things in common including the formation of the research question, the planning of the search strategy, the gathering of information, and more.

**Pertinent** Central to the online research model is the need for students to know when to disregard information. With the amount of information available, it is imperative that students learn how to evaluate whether the information that they find is pertinent to their purpose. This begins by having students clarify their objectives before they begin the research process.

**Quantity of Information** Some Web sites continue to grow in size every day. With the interactive nature of the Internet, some sites solicit input, examples, and stories from others. If this type of site meets the students' needs, they should be reminded to visit it regularly to keep up-to-date. Having students practice extensive searches on topics that they are familiar with will help them realize the most effective way to find information and help them eliminate some of the frustrations of the over-abundance of information.

**Requirements** Some sites have certain requirements for use. Students should learn to exercise caution if they are asked to submit registration information at a site. Another annoyance is the use of proprietary software (plug-ins or players) that forces the user to access the site using a specific Internet browser. When evaluating a Web site to use for instruction, be aware that, if it was

designed for one browser or the other, it may not be presented properly. All Web pages should be designed with the world's two most popular browsers in mind: Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer. (See the Classroom Connect Newsletter October 1998 story for more information.)

**Scholastic Reviews** There are many Web review columns in professional periodicals that list and describe Web sites of value. Use these reviews to choose sites to support instruction. There are many awards given on the Net, and you should use caution when choosing sites because they have won awards. Oftentimes; awards are created to build up visits to the site of the awarding page. One way to determine if a site is scholarly in nature is to see what type of sites have linked to it. This type of Internet search can be conducted using both HotBot and AltaVista.(cont...)

<http://www.hotbot.com/>

<http://www.altavista.com/>

*understand and use information  
in multiple formats from a wide  
range of sources when it is  
presented via computers."*

— Paul Gilster

HotBot employs a drop-down menu to search for links to individual sites, while AltaVista allows users to type **link:<URL>** in its search box. Try this example with AltaVista. In the search box at the top of the home page, type the following:

link:<http://kathyschrock.net/>

**Theorists** The major educational tenets of noted theorists still remain viable in the online world. Whether it is Eisenberg and Bekowitz (The Big Six), Robert Marzano (Dimensions of Learning), or Bernie Dodge (WebQuests), sound educational theory should be the basis of all learning, including online research.

<http://big6.com/>

<http://www.mcrel.org/products/dimensions/whathow.asp>

<http://webquest.sdsu.edu/>

By having students take the information that they find and make conscious, educated decisions about what to use and how to structure it, they gain the higher-order thinking skills necessary for lifetime learning in an information-rich society.

**Uniqueness** The Web has many unique characteristics that are not present in the print world. Marsha Tate and Jan Alexander describe marketing-oriented Web pages, Web pages that blend entertainment, information, and advertising, and software requirements that limit access to information as some of these unique characteristics.

(See "Xtra Information" for the URL)

**Verifiable** Whenever possible students need to verify Internet information in a reputable print source. If no citations are included, the student needs to conduct further research to determine the validity of the site's content.

## Critical Evaluation Web Sites

### Critical Evaluation Surveys and Resources

<http://www.discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/eval.html>

### Evaluating Internet-Based Information: A Goals-Based Approach

<http://www2.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/project/meridian/feat2-6/feat2-6.html>

### Separating the Wheat from the Chaff

<http://discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/chaff.html>

### Evaluating Web-Based Resources: A Practical Perspective

<http://www.thelearningsite.net/cyberlibrarian/elibraries/eval.html>

### Evaluation of World Wide Web Sites: An ERIC Digest

<http://ericir.syr.edu/i/home/digests/edoir9802.html>

### Bibliography on Evaluating Internet Resources

<http://www.lib.vt.edu/research/evaluate/evalbiblio.html>

### 10 C's for Evaluating Internet Resources

<http://www.uwec.edu/library/Guides/tencs.html>

**The Five W's** As with any investigative reporting, students can easily apply the five W's to simply evaluate a Web site: Who wrote the pages and are they an expert in the field? What does the author say is the purpose of the site? When was the site created, updated, last worked on? Where does the information come from? Why is the information useful for my purpose?

**Xtra Information** Tate and Alexander have also designed evaluation instruments for different types of Web pages. They contend that different criteria need to be examined for the different types of pages.

<http://www2.widener.edu/Wolfram-Memorial-Library/webevaluation/webeval.htm>

**Yahoo!** Information in a general-purpose directory such as Yahoo! has been filtered and organized to produce a browsable, keyword-searchable index of a portion of the Net's Web destinations. Students should take advantage of these directories to get an overview of what is available on the Net as they formulate their search strategies.

<http://www.yahoo.com/>

Search engines are useful only when students have gained their background knowledge, identified key terms, and learned effective search strategies. There is much more information available through search engines than directories, and as long as students have a clear strategy in mind, the number of results returned should not be overwhelming.

<http://searchenginewatch.com/>

**Zen** In a 1995 issue of *Computers in Libraries*, Kirk Doran writes about what the Internet is not. He contends that, since the Internet cannot be searched all at once or seen in its entirety, the usual method of matching one type of question with one type of source does not work. He feels, due to the fact that the Net is not run by one company, it lacks the organization and consistency we are accustomed to in print, and the navigation is not consistent.

<http://www.stlcc.cc.mo.us/lstdocs/internet.html>

Finally, Paul Gilster's definition of digital literacy can be summed up in a single phrase: "the ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers."

<http://www.december.com/cmcmag/1997/oct/bunz.html>

If we strive to teach students the best way to critically evaluate the information that they find in relation to the purpose at hand, we will produce a generation of digitally literate adults who are equipped to learn throughout their lifetimes. In the end, is this not the greatest lesson we can teach today's students?

---

by Kathy Schrock

<kathy@kathyschrock.net>

<http://discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/>

# Evaluating Web Sites

Source: [http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating\\_web.html](http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating_web.html)

## Criteria for the Classroom

### Trying to sort out the gems from the junk on the Internet?

Teachers and students may use the following criteria to select web sites for their academic work.

Faculty developing course syllabi may link to Faculty Checklist for Evaluating Information for more details.

### Criteria for Evaluating Web Resources

- Purpose
- Authority
- Objectivity
- Appropriateness
- Currency
- Responsibility
- Clarity
- Accessibility

Examples below represent particularly good or especially bad web sites for the criterion in question. Can you tell which is which?

## Purpose

NANODOCS <http://www.rythospital.com/nanodocs/>

What is the purpose of the site or page? Look for tips in graphics and text. Web pages may be...

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• commercial</li><li>• informative</li><li>• educational</li><li>• entertaining</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• persuasive</li><li>• personal</li><li>• institutional</li><li>• a hoax</li></ul>
---	--

What does the URL (Web address) say about the producer of the web site, and its purpose? Look at the final syllable in the domain name. The first three sites below are all "White House" sites. Which is the official White House site? How can you tell? Note that all three sites are easily accessible in a web search for "White House".

.gov Government agency: [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

.net Internet Service Provider: [www.whitehouse.net](http://www.whitehouse.net)

.com Commercial site (Note: [www.whitehouse.com](http://www.whitehouse.com) is a pornographic site. Go there at your own risk.)

.edu Higher education - [www.lesley.edu](http://www.lesley.edu). Other educational sites may appear

with different domain names: [www.whitehouse.gov/kids](http://www.whitehouse.gov/kids)

.mil Military site- [www.navy.mil/](http://www.navy.mil/)

~ ("tilde") Personal site -  
<http://www.members.tripod.com/~DAdams/qkbrdinf.html>

.org Organization; may be charitable, religious, or a lobbying group -  
<http://www.rtda.org>.

- Country names appear as a two-letter abbreviation in the domain name. For a complete list, go to Domain Name Registries around the World <http://www.norid.no/domenenavnbasert/domreg.html?sort=name>.
- New domain names include .museum, .info and .biz, among others. Read more about them at InterNic FAQ on Domain Names <http://www.internic.net/faqs/new-tlds.html>.

## Authority

Growing herbs in the home garden <http://nres.illinois.edu/>

- Who is the author?
- What are his credentials?
- Does he have sufficient authority to speak on the subject?
- Is there any way to reach him?
- Is there an organizational or corporate sponsor?
- Is this page authentic, or is it a hoax?
- Is there a reference list?

## Objectivity

Environmental tobacco smoke and tobacco related mortality in a prospective study of Californians, 1960-98  
<http://www.bmj.com/content/326/7398/1057.full>

- Does the content reflect a bias?
- Is the bias explicit or hidden?
- Does the identity of the author or sponsor suggest a bias?
- How does the bias impact the usefulness of the information?

## Appropriateness & Relevance

Women and Aids <http://147.129.226.1/library/research/AIDSFACTS.htm>

- Is the content appropriate for your classroom or your assignment?
- Is the reading level appropriate for your students?
- Is the content appropriate for the age or developmental level of your students?
- Is the content accurate, complete, well-written?
- Is the content relevant to your topic or question?

## Currency

CNN <http://www.cnn.com/>

- Is the information on the page up-to-date?
- Can you tell when the page was last updated?
- Are there dead links?
- Is there a difference between the date the information was created and the date the page was last updated?

## Responsibility

Pregnant women can drink safely in moderation

<http://www.aim-digest.com/gateway/pages/women/articles/preg2.htm>

- Are the authors up-front about their purpose and content?
- Is there a way to contact the authors?
- Do the authors give credit for information used?
- Is there a reference list?

## Clarity

A New Beginning for Life <http://www.iwr.com/becalmd/>

- Is the information clearly presented?
- Is the text neat, legible and formatted for easy reading?
- If there are graphics, do they add to the content or distract?
- If there are advertisements, do they interfere with your ability to use the page?
- Are the pages well organized?
- Are there mistakes in spelling or word usage?

## Accessibility

MSNBC <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/>

- Can you get in?
- Does the site load quickly?
- Can you move around the site easily?
- Is the site or page still there next time?
- Is there a text-only alternative for the visually-impaired?

## Hoaxes!

Hoaxes present a major challenge for evaluating information found on the Web. Here are several examples to test your Evaluation IQ. To verify the authenticity of the site, you may have to drill down through several

layers to find "About" or "Contact Us". Some of the examples below are harmless and entertaining; others are harmful, even hateful. All could give misinformation to the unaware reader.

Martin Luther King

- <http://www.thekingcenter.org/>
- [martinlutherking.org](http://martinlutherking.org)

World Trade Organization

- <http://www.gatt.org/>
- <http://www.wto.org>

The Onion <http://www.onion.com/>

Women and Aids <http://147.129.226.1/library/research/AIDSFacts.htm>

## Read All About It!

Beck, Susan E. (1997, July 7). *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly, or Why It's a Good Idea to Evaluate Web Sources*. Institute for Technology-Assisted Learning, New Mexico State University. Retrieved September 12, 2000, from the World Wide Web: <http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/eval.html>.

Piper, Paul S. (2000, September). Better read that again: Web hoaxes and misinformation. *Searcher*, 8 (8). Retrieved July 9, 2001, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.infoday.com/searcher/sep00/piper.htm>.

Schrock, Kathleen. (1997). *Evaluating Internet Web Sites: An Educator's Guide*. Manhattan, KS: The MASTER Teacher, Inc. Announcement retrieved September 12, 2000 from the World Wide Web: <http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/books2.html#evaluating>.

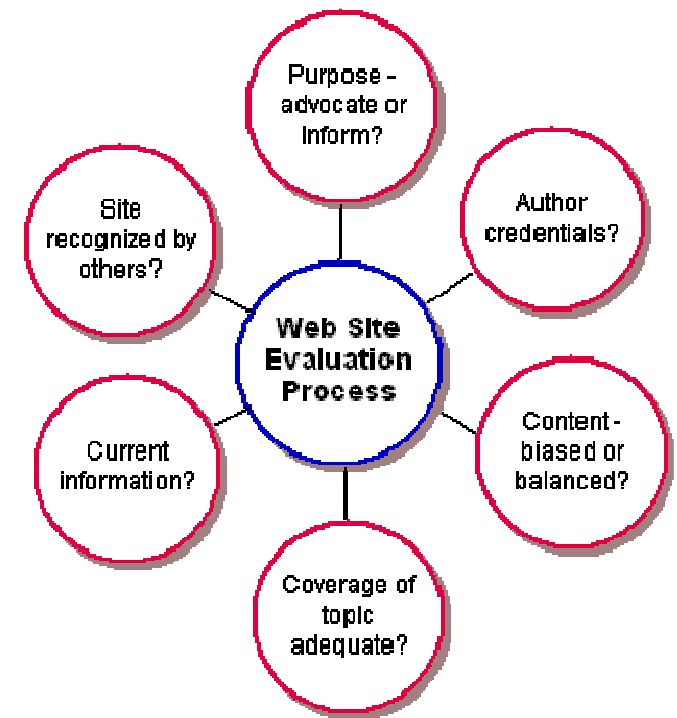
Tilman, Hope N. (2000, May 30). *Evaluating Quality on the Net*. Retrieved September 12, 2000 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.hopetillman.com/findqual.html>.



# Evaluating Web Sites

Source: <http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/>

1. **Purpose:** Determine whether the main purpose of the site is to inform or to persuade (advocate for a cause).
2. **Author:** The best sites are produced by those who have appropriate education, training, or experience to write with authority on the topic. Check site documents or external sources to find out more about the author.
3. **Content:**
  - **Bias:** Consider whether content seems biased. Does the author have a "vested interest" in the topic? Look for documentation of claims and a balanced point of view.
  - **Coverage:** Shop around for the best source. You can compare the page to others on the same topic to see which provides better coverage.
  - **Currency:** If you are looking for the most current information on a topic, be sure to determine when information was added.
4. **Recognition:** Also try to determine whether the site has been recognized as exemplary by others linking to it, tagging or citing it.



# Evaluating Web Sites > Purpose <http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/pg1.html>

*"We've inherited this notion that if it pops up on a screen and looks good, we tend to think of it as fairly credible."*

Paul Gilster, *Digital Literacy* (1997)



Traditionally, publishers verify the accuracy of works before they are printed. However, there is no real filtering mechanism on the Web. This work falls to you. This tutorial introduces some useful indicators to help you make judgments and become a more informed consumer of Web information.

Source evaluation is an art, not an exact science. Robert Harris notes ". . . there is no single perfect indicator of reliability, truthfulness, or value. Instead you must make an inference from a collection of clues or indicators, based on the use you plan to make of your source." (*Evaluating Internet Research Sources*)

## 1A: Determine the Type of Content

Web search engines, such as Google, return a wide variety of results -- Web sites, blog postings, articles from newspapers, popular magazines and scholarly journals, etc. One of the first challenges is simply figuring out what type of content you have found.



For useful tips, watch this short movie: Understanding Google Search Results [http://liblearn.osu.edu/movies/google\\_results.htm](http://liblearn.osu.edu/movies/google_results.htm)

### ce to Your Purpose

Evaluation takes place in the context of *your* research task. What do you need? Are you browsing for new ideas and opinions or trying to find evidence to support a position?

**Ask:** *Does this Web site provide the kind of information that I need?*

**Look for:** Links to pages that tell more about the content of the Web site. They may be called:

- About This Site
- Site Index
- Site Map

For example, Project Vote Smart <http://www.votesmart.org/> is a great source for information about political candidates. Click on "About Us" to find out more about the organization and the site.



### 1C: Purpose of the Site

It's important to understand a site's **primary purpose** (or "mission") as you consider its value for your project. Web sites can be categorized as:

1. **Advocacy or "soap box" sites**
2. **Commercial sites**
3. **Reference / Information sites**

See the chart below for more information about each type of site.

Type	Purpose	Produced By	Description & Examples
<b>Advocacy</b>	Sway opinion	Organizations or individuals	Advocacy sites (including blogs) may provide a wealth of information, but it's important to understand that these postings, articles, reports and policy papers are intended to promote a particular viewpoint or reflect one person's opinion. Usually opposing viewpoints on these issues are not represented. Advocacy sites are most useful for understanding different points of view.  <i>Example:</i> Secondhand Smoke <a href="http://www.no-smoke.org/getthefacts.php?dp=d18">http://www.no-smoke.org/getthefacts.php?dp=d18</a>
<b>Commercial</b>	Promote or sell products and services	Companies	Commercial sites may provide short articles and other useful information to draw readers to their site. Commercial sites may also offer reviews of their own products. Will they be likely to tell both sides of the story, or should you look elsewhere for more balanced reviews?

			<i>Example:</i> Princeton Review <a href="http://www.princetonreview.com/">http://www.princetonreview.com/</a>
<b>Reference / Information</b>	Provide access to useful information and services	Universities, government agencies, publishers, individuals, organizations	Because these sites are not designed to promote a specific viewpoint or product, they are more likely to offer a full range of information on a topic.  <i>Example:</i> Encyclopedia of Cleveland History <a href="http://ech.case.edu/">http://ech.case.edu/</a>

**Ask:** *What is the site's primary purpose: to inform or to promote an idea or product?*

**Look for:**

- Introductory material (such as an "About This Site" link) that describes the site's mission or goals.
- Membership applications, requests for contributions of money or time (usually found on advocacy sites).
- Follow a few links to see what kind of information is provided on the site.

**Activity**

Road test your evaluation skills by identifying the **main purpose** of some sites:

Look at Clean Energy Solutions <http://www.sierraclub.org/energy/>. Is it an advocacy, commercial, or reference site? Here is our answer.

**Our answer:** This is an advocacy site. Although it provides a great deal of useful information about this topic, the main purpose of the Sierra Club is to raise awareness about dangers to the environment. See, for example, the "Take Action" link on this page.

For even more practice, try this Site Evaluation Quiz [http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/sitepurpose\\_quiz.html](http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/sitepurpose_quiz.html).

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# Evaluating Web Sites > Author, Publisher <http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/pg2.html>

## 2A: Author

When evaluating Web content, it is important to consider the background of its author. The author is either the person or the organization responsible for determining what information is provided by the site. (Note that the "webmaster" or designer of a Web site is not usually considered to be the author.) You may need to browse around a site to determine its author.

**Ask:** *Does the author have appropriate education, training, or experience to write with authority (credibility) on this topic?*

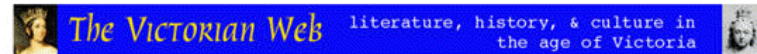
### Look for:

- Linked biographical statements, resumes, or other background about the site author.
- If no individual author is named, consider the reputation of the organization associated with the site.

For example, the **Victorian Web** <http://www.victorianweb.org/> was created by a professor at Brown University. The Credits page provides more information about him.

#### Credits: Who Created The Victorian Web?

George P. Landow, Professor of English and the History of Art, Brown University



#### The Victorian Web and Context32



The Victorian Web is the WWW translation of Brown University's *Context 61*, which served as a resource for courses in Victorian literature [follow for [syllabus](#) of one such course.] These materials ultimately derive from *Context 32*, the *Intermedia* web that provided contextual information for English 32, "Survey of English literature from 1700 to the Present." *Context 32* was begun in Spring 1987 as part of Brown University's [Institute for Research in Information and Scholarship](#) (IRIS) *Intermedia* project, which IBM, Apple Computers, the Annenberg/CPB Project, and other sources funded.

For this predecessor of the current site, George P. Landow designed and edited the entire web, made many of the links, and was responsible for most of the materials on the individual authors and works as well as those on Biblical typology. He authored multiple *lexias* throughout the web and selected both the external criticism cited and most of the *manuscripts*. All sections for images are his. Under his direction, David Cady wrote many of the general context and

# FREE RANGE LIBRARIAN

K.G. SCHNEIDER'S BLOG ON LIBRARIANSHIP, WRITING, AND  
EVERYTHING ELSE

The Genteel Lady's Compleat Guide to The  
Domestick Art of Homebrewing

Sunday, March 28, 2010



Why don't more women brew beer?

Women I consider capable of  
holding national office or even  
starting a new country have ...

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Find out more about the author of this blog, Free Range Librarian  
<http://freerangelibrarian.com/> by clicking the About link near the top of  
the page.

There are many ways to check up on author credentials. See Using Online Resources to Check Authority  
<http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/libcat.html> for more information.

## 2B: Publisher

In addition to the author of a page or site, think also about the Web server that "publishes" it.

Sites may sit on an organization's Web server but not be **official pages** of that organization. For example, some university departments allow students and faculty to publish "personal" pages on university Web servers. These pages are not official publications of the university.

**Ask:** *Who is responsible for publishing this page?*

### Look for:

- Copyright symbol (©), often found at the bottom of the page, to determine who claims responsibility for the page.
- The "tilde" symbol (~) preceding a directory name in the site address. This indicates that the page is in a "personal" directory on the server. For example:  
<http://www.university.edu/~jones/page.html>

### Activity

Find the authors of these Web sites:

- Anthropology Resources on the Internet <http://www.aaanet.org/resources/>

- Eye on DNA <http://www.eyondna.com/>
- Focus on the Death Penalty <http://justice.uaa.alaska.edu/death/>

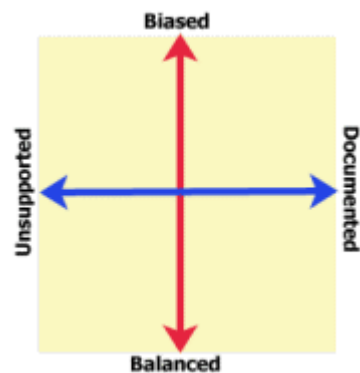
Find the authors of these Web sites:

- Anthropology Resources on the Internet  
**Our answer:** American Anthropological Association
  - Eye on DNA  
**Our answer:** Dr. Hsien Hsien Lei
  - Focus on the Death Penalty  
**Our answer:** Justice Center, University of Alaska at Anchorage
- 

## Evaluating Web Sites > Content <http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/pg3.html>

### 3A: Content Bias/Balance

There are a number of factors to consider about the content of any site you intend to use for a research project.



**Ask:**

1. *For controversial topics, is the presentation biased (one-sided) or balanced (both pro and con viewpoints provided)?*
2. *Are claims and arguments supported (with documentation) or unsubstantiated?*

It is also important to fight your own biases and **keep an open mind**.

"Most of us have biases, and we can easily fool ourselves if we don't make a conscious effort to keep our minds open to new information. Psychologists have shown over and over again that humans naturally tend to accept any information that supports what they already believe, even if the information isn't very reliable. And humans also naturally tend to reject information that conflicts with those beliefs, even if the information is solid. These predilections are powerful. Unless we make an active effort to listen to all sides we can become trapped into believing something that isn't so, and won't even know it."

*A Process for Avoiding Deception*, FactCheckED.org <http://factchecked.org/tools-of-the-trade/>

**Look for:**

- References to alternative points of view.
- Strongly worded assertions, which should be supported by evidence and documentation.

***Some Examples:***

- Public Agenda Issue Guide: Immigration <http://www.publicagenda.org/citizen/issueguides/immigration> -- presents a wide range of opinion on this controversial topic.
- The Cigarette Papers <http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft8489p25j&brand=>-- sources of information are documented for each chapter.



UC Press E-Books Collection, 1982-2004  
formerly eScholarship Editions

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**The Cigarette Papers**

Foreword  
Preface

Chapter 1 Looking through a Keyhole
 

- Introduction
- B&W's And Bat's Corporate Structure
- History Of The B&W Documents
- Limitations Of The Evidence
- Conclusion
- References

Chapter 2 Smoking and Disease: The...  
Chapter 3 Addiction and Cigarettes as...  
Chapter 4 The Search for a "Safe" Cig...  
Chapter 5 Public Relations in the "Safe...  
Chapter 6 Agricultural Chemicals and...  
Chapter 7 Legal Concerns Facing the I...  
Chapter 8 Lawyer Management of Scie...

**The Cigarette Papers**  
Stanton A. Glantz  
John Slade  
Lisa A. Bero  
Peter Hanauer  
Deborah E. Barnes

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS  
Berkeley · Los Angeles · Oxford

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- White Poison: The Horrors of Milk [http://www.colorlines.com/archives/2001/12/white\\_poison.html](http://www.colorlines.com/archives/2001/12/white_poison.html) claims are not supported by documentation.

### 3B: Coverage

Another factor to consider is how well the site covers the topic.

**Ask:** Do other sites cover aspects of the topic that are missing from the site you are evaluating?

**Look for:**

Other sites on the same topic that you can quickly browse and compare to yours. This is also a good way to evaluate controversial claims.

#### **How to Locate Similar Sites**

You can locate similar sites easily using *Google*. In the search box, type:

**related:[URL of known site]**

*Example:* related:www.deathpenalty.org

### **3C: Currency**

If the topic of your research is time-sensitive, consider the age and currency of any sources (Web or print) that you use.

**Ask:** *When was the material written? Has information been added recently? Are links functional or broken?*

**Look for:**

- Page creation or revision dates.
- "What's New" page that describes when content was updated.
- Press releases or other dated materials.

#### **Activity**

Compare these Web sites. Which offers more balanced (both pro and con) coverage of this topic?

- Angel on Death Row <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/angel/procon/>
- Death Penalty Focus <http://www.deathpenalty.org/>

Compare your findings to our answer.

**Our answer:** *Angel on Death Row* provides more balanced coverage of this topic. *Death Penalty Focus* is an advocacy site, established and maintained by "a non-profit organization dedicated to the abolition of capital punishment through grassroots organizing, research, and the dissemination of information about the death penalty and its alternatives." It offers a great deal of information from the anti-death penalty point of view, but nothing from the other perspective.

---

# Evaluating Web Sites > Recognition <http://liblearn.osu.edu/tutor/les1/pg4.html>

## 4A: Signs of Recognition

Finally, what do others think about the site? Depending upon what type of content you are evaluating, the signs of recognition will vary.

**Ask:** *Do others recognize the value of this content?*

### Look for:

- Some indication of how many other sites link to a site you are evaluating.
- Tags for this site in public bookmarks/favorites collections.
- Reader comments, ratings and links to blogs.
- Citations of articles by other researchers.

## 4B: How to Find Linking Sites

You can locate similar sites that "link" to a particular URL using *Google* or *AltaVista*. In the search box, type:

**link:[URL of known site]**

*Example:* link:www.deathpenaltyinfo.org

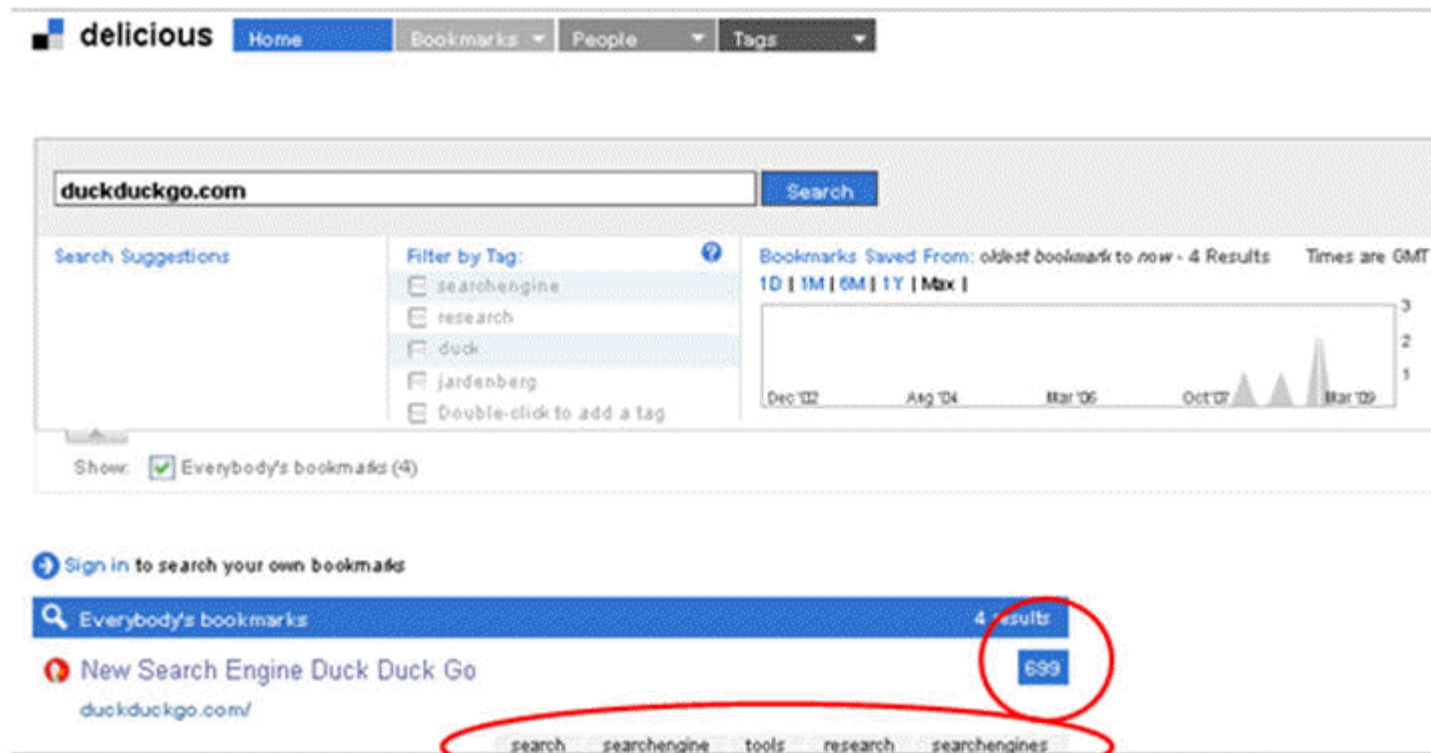
Be careful to format your search exactly as shown above. It may be easier to use Google Advanced Search

[http://www.google.com/advanced\\_search?hl=en](http://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en). Click the plus sign to open the full advanced search form, then scroll down to *Page Specific Tools*, and type the URL into the box labeled *Find pages that link to the page*.

## 4C: How to Find Public Bookmarks for a Site

Check to see whether a Web site has been tagged and chosen for inclusion in one of the Web-based bookmarking sites, such as del.icio.us

<http://www.delicious.com/>. Enter the site title or the URL in the search box at the top of the page (as shown in the illustration) to find out how many people have tagged this site.



#### 4D: How to Find Reactions to Blogs

Technorati <http://technorati.com/> is a useful tool for finding out more about blogs and bloggers. Try a search for either the blogger's name or the title of the blog, then click the Blogs tab at the top of the search results. This will show you a list of blogs that match your search. Now simply click on the title of a blog to view more information, such as the "authority" rating, number of fans, etc. (as shown in the illustration). Technorati authority is defined as the number of blogs linking to a website in the last six months.



#### 4E: How to Find Citations of Articles

In addition to web pages, you may want to see where an article has been cited. There is no simple way to find all sources that cite an article. Here are some tips for getting some useful information as you evaluate an article found on the Web. Keep in mind that there may not be any citations for very new articles.

For articles published in popular magazines or on blogs, the easiest approach is to use a Web search engine. Search for the title of the article. Here's an example using Google

<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=%22authority+in+the+age+of+the+amateur%22&btnG=Google+Search>.

If an article is published in a scholarly journal, it has usually been "peer reviewed." That means that other scholars have determined it is acceptable for publication. However, it's still helpful to find out whether an article has been used by other researchers.

One way to approach this task is through Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.com/>. Entries in this database indicate whether a source is cited by others and provide links to those other sources (as shown in the illustration). This can also lead you to more information on your topic.

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Google scholar "believe it or not" Search [Advanced Scholar Search](#)  
[Scholar Preferences](#)

Scholar Articles and patents anytime include citations Results 1 - 10 of about 28,100. (0.38 sec)



**[Believe It or Not](#)** [yale.ed](#)  
U Hasson, JP Simmons, A Todorov - [Psychological Science, 2005 - pss.sagepub.com](#)  
Find it w  
We present two experiments that cast doubt on existing evidence suggesting that it is impossible to suspend belief in a comprehended proposition. In Experiment 1, we found that interrupting the encoding of a statement's veracity decreased memory for the statement's falsity when ...  
[Cited by 15](#) - [Related articles](#) - [BL Direct](#) - [All 10 versions](#)

**[Believe It Or Not!](#)** [physic](#)  
JM Rothstein - [Physical Therapy, 1992 - physicaltherapyonline.org](#)  
Find it w  
Amid the honky-tonk that was once New York's Times Square stood an emporium of mystical proportions where barkers beckoned you with tales of the exotic world that lay behind the turnstile. They assured you that once inside you could "Believe It Or Not." The rest of the ...  
[All 27 versions](#)

#### 4F: Tools To Assist Evaluation

Another tool, the McAfee Site Advisor <http://www.siteadvisor.com/download/windows.html> browser add-on (for Internet Explorer), adds safety ratings to search results to help protect you from adware, spam, and online scams, as shown in the illustration below.

**Search Results**

- [Free Screensaver](#)  [www.screensaver.com](http://www.screensaver.com) - This just may be one of the best screensaver sites
- [Get Free Screensavers](#)  [www.screensavers.com](http://www.screensavers.com)

**Y!** [Find Screen Savers](#)  
Yahoo! Shortcut - [All Screen Savers](#)

1. [Cool-Screensavers](#)  
Offers screen savers and other 3D designs.  
Category: [Screen Savers](#)  
[www.cool-screensavers.com](http://www.cool-screensavers.com)

**McAfee SiteAdvisor**

**Free Screensaver**  
screensaver.com

**Use caution.**

- 44 red downloads
- 245 e-mails/week
- Links to red sites [More info...](#)

Try / buy other McAfee security products

**Activity**

Use Google Advanced Search [http://www.google.com/advanced\\_search?hl=en](http://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en) to determine how many sites have made links to:

- **ipl2 -- www.ipl.org**
  - **Go Ask Alice -- www.goaskalice.columbia.edu**
-

# Five criteria for evaluating Web pages

Source: <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/print/4499>

Evaluation of Web documents	How to interpret the basics
<p>1. Accuracy of Web Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who wrote the page and can you contact him or her?</li><li>• What is the purpose of the document and why was it produced?</li><li>• Is this person qualified to write this document?</li></ul>	<p>Accuracy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure author provides e-mail or a contact address/phone number.</li><li>• Know the distinction between author and Webmaster.</li></ul>
<p>2. Authority of Web Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Who published the document and is it separate from the "Webmaster?"</li><li>• Check the domain of the document, what institution publishes this document?</li><li>• Does the publisher list his or her qualifications?</li></ul>	<p>Authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What credentials are listed for the authors)?</li><li>• Where is the document published? Check URL domain.</li></ul>
<p>3. Objectivity of Web Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What goals/objectives does this page meet?</li><li>• How detailed is the information?</li><li>• What opinions (if any) are expressed by the author?</li></ul>	<p>Objectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Determine if page is a mask for advertising; if so information might be biased.</li><li>• View any Web page as you would an infommercial on television. Ask yourself: why was this written and for whom?</li></ul>
<p>4. Currency of Web Documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When was it produced?</li><li>• When was it updated?</li><li>• How up-to-date are the links (if any)?</li></ul>	<p>Currency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How many dead links are on the page?</li><li>• Are the links current or updated regularly?</li><li>• Is the information on the page outdated?</li></ul>



## 5. Coverage of the Web Documents

- Are the links (if any) evaluated and do they complement the documents' themes?
- Is it all images or a balance of text and images?
- Is the information presented cited correctly?

## Coverage

- If page requires special software to view the information, how much are you missing if you don't have the software?
- Is it free or is there a fee to obtain the information?
- Is there an option for text only, or frames, or a suggested browser for better viewing?

## Putting it all together

- **Accuracy.** If your page lists the author and institution that published the page and provides a way of contacting him/her and . . .
- **Authority.** If your page lists the author credentials and its domain is preferred (.edu, .gov, .org, or .net), and, . .
- **Objectivity.** If your page provides accurate information with limited advertising and it is objective in presenting the information, and . . .
- **Currency.** If your page is current and updated regularly (as stated on the page) and the links (if any) are also up-to-date, and . . .
- **Coverage.** If you can view the information properly--not limited to fees, browser technology, or software requirement, then . . .

You may have a Web page that could be of value to your research!

# **THE FIVE W'S OF WEB SITE EVALUATION**

**Source: <http://kathyschrock.net/abceval/5ws.htm>**

## **W<sub>H</sub>O**

**Who** wrote the pages and are they an expert? Is a biography of the author included? How can I find out more about the author?

## **W<sub>H</sub>AT**

**What** does the author say is the purpose of the site? What else might the author have in mind for the site? What makes the site easy to use? What information is included and does this information differ from other sites?

## **W<sub>H</sub>EN**

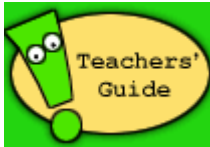
**When** was the site created? When was the site last updated?

## **W<sub>H</sub>ERE**

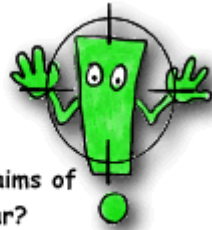
**Where** does the information come from? Where can I look to find out more about the sponsor of the site?

## **W<sub>H</sub>Y**

**Why** is this information useful for my purpose? Why should I use this information? Why is this page better than another?



1. Is it clear who has



2. Are the aims of the site clear?



3. Does the site achieve its aims?



4. Is the site relevant to me?



5. Can the information be checked?



6. When was the site produced?



7. Is the information biased in any way?



8. Does the site tell you about choices open to you?

1. Is it clear who has written the information? <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch1.htm>
2. Are the aims of the site clear? <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch2.htm>
3. Does the site achieve its aims? <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch3.htm>
4. Is the site relevant to me? <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch4.htm>
5. Can the information be checked? <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch5.htm>
6. When was the site produced? <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch6.htm>
7. Is the information biased in any way? <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch7.htm>
8. Does the site tell you about choices open to you? <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch8.htm>

The Quiz <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch9q1.htm>

The Checklist Summary <http://aam.hct.ac.ae/aam/library/semester%202/org.uk/ch9q1.htm>

# 1. Is it clear who has written the information?

Label the diagram

Where will you usually find the name of the author(s) ?

\_\_\_\_\_

Footer

Header

Body



When you find the name of the author it is useful to find out as much information as you can about them.

Check if anyone else knows of them, e.g. teacher, doctor.

Also check to see where you can contact them.

Is there an address, phone number and e-mail?



Just an e-mail address, on it's own, is no proof that the author is a genuine expert on a subject or even who they say they are, because anyone can get an e-mail address.

LINKS - Some web sites have a link taking you to another web site. If the authors of this other web site really know about the site you are visiting, there will also be a link back.

## 2. Are the aims of the site clear?

Web sites are created for many purposes.

Can you find 6 uses of web sites in the word search?

EDUCATE

LINKS

CONTACTS

SELL

ENTERTAIN

INFORMATION

F	E	D	U	S	A	B	J	R	C	O
I	N	F	O	R	M	A	T	I	O	N
N	T	T	E	G	D	S	J	R	N	A
Y	E	D	U	C	A	T	E	G	T	L
F	R	N	Q	U	R	E	L	R	A	F
G	T	R	P	S	R	L	S	K	C	L
H	A	B	D	W	E	V	B	Y	T	F
L	I	N	K	S	C	S	E	B	S	Y
B	N	C	P	Y	E	R	C	S	R	T

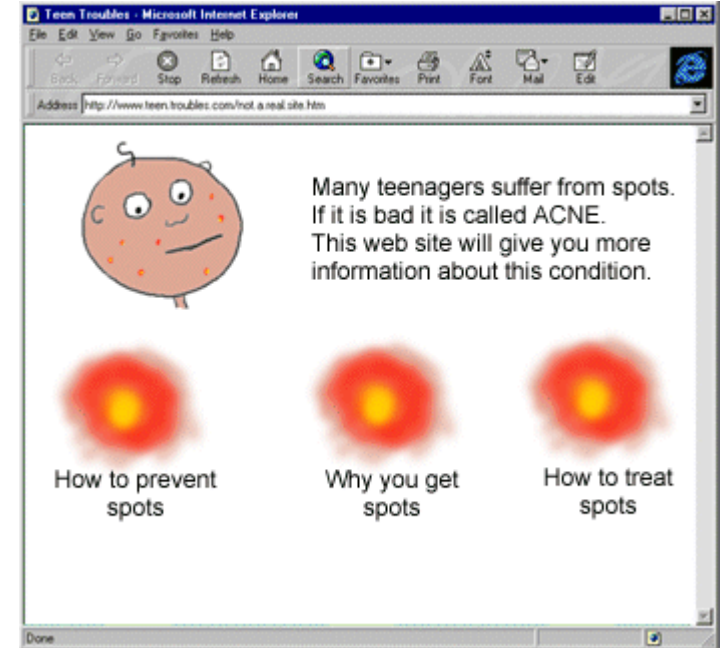
A good web site will tell you who it is for, what it is about and what it is trying to do. These are the sites aims. Look for clues if the site does not clearly state its aims, e.g. section titles, the look of the site, how easy it is to understand.

What do you think are the 3 main aims of this site?

1 .....

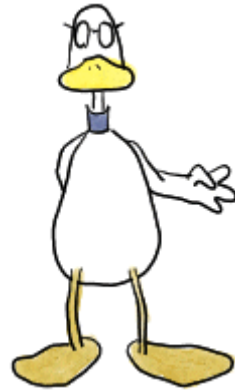
2 .....

3 .....



### 3. Does the site achieve its aims?

Make sure that the web site **REALLY DOES** do what it says it will.



Unscramble these words to find some ways that web sites can achieve their aims:

MADASRIG - used to explain things

SPICERUT - there's one on this page

TRUSTOILSNAIL - used to make a site more interesting

AMINTINROOF - what you look for on a web site

AGEALUNG - words are this

If a site does not do what it says it will, it will not be useful to you

## 4. Is the site relevant to me?



A good web site will be useful to the people it is aimed at, i.e. YOU!

You have a project to design trainers for teenagers. You must look for information on the Internet. Think of five questions that you would like to find answers to on the Internet.

1

.....

3

.....

5

.....

2

.....

4

.....

Remember, the aims of the site will tell you if you will find the information you are looking for.



## 5. Can the information be checked?

Anybody can set up a site and say anything. So, the information may not always be correct.

You must always check:

1. Who wrote the information
2. Does anyone else say the same thing?
3. Links to other web sites
4. Other places where you can check the information
5. Is it really saying something new?



There are many places where you can check this information. Match the place with the sort of information you might find there:

<b>Doctors &amp; Hospital</b>	Information about almost any subject
<b>Supermarket</b>	Books, magazines and leaflets on lots of different subjects
<b>Childline</b>	A leaflet about drugs
<b>Disco or Club</b>	Information about how to grow rhubarb
<b>Library</b>	Help and advice about young peoples concerns

<b>The Rhubarb Society</b>	Posters and advice about illness and health
<b>The Internet</b>	Leaflets about diet and healthy eating



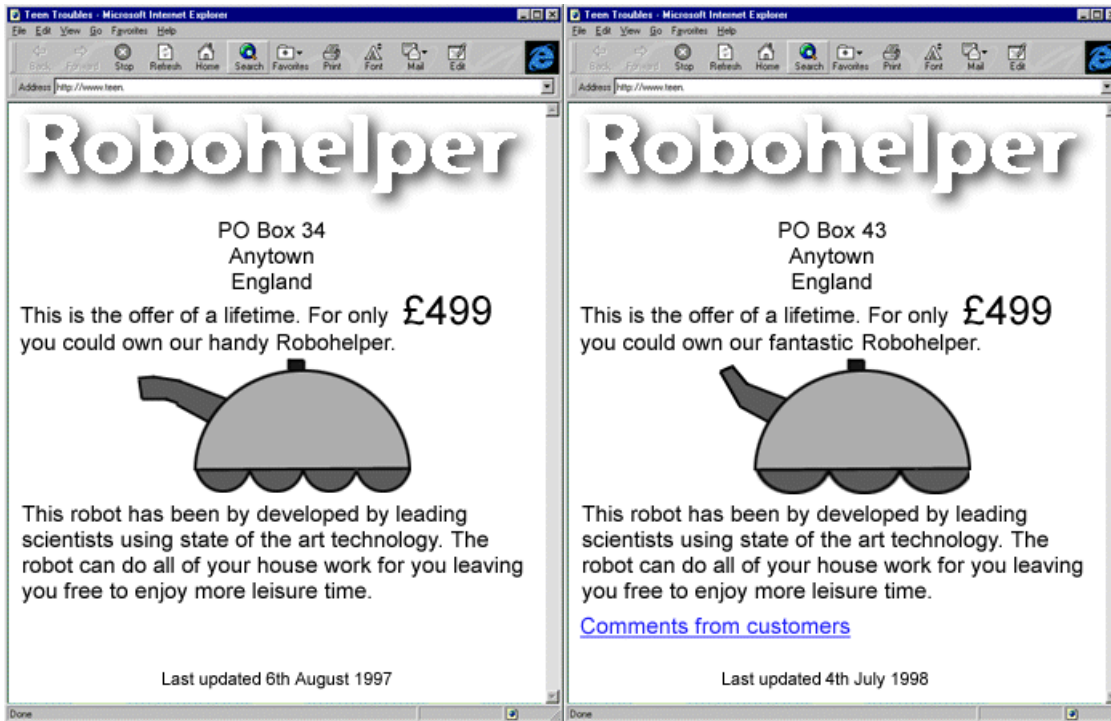
Never follow advice from the Internet unless you are sure it is correct. In particular do not follow any advice that goes against what your doctor says.

## 6. When was the site produced?

Check to see when the site was made or updated. If it was a long time ago, the information may be out of date.

Remember that the date is usually found in the footer.

Look at these two pages. The first one is the old one, the second one is the updated one. See if you can see 5 differences.

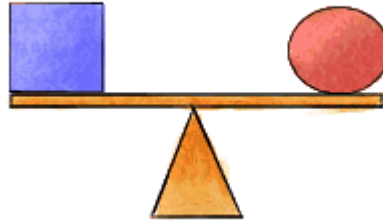


Remember, a web site may say that it was updated recently, but the information may not be different. To be sure it is correct, check somewhere else.



## 7. Is the information biased in any way?

Saying something in a certain way to make you think or believe something is called **BIAS**.



A site that is unbiased will aim to give you a balanced opinion. It will consider many people's opinions or many sets of facts before giving the authors own idea. In this case, you can form your own ideas instead of just accepting that one set of information must be the "right one".

Try this crossword:

Across

1. An unbiased web site is this (8)
4. A place to visit on the Internet (7)
7. Look for one of these to help find more information (4)
8. A person's own idea about a subject (7)
11. Used to sell you something (6)
12. Makes you think in a certain way (4)
13. What you try to find on the Internet (11)

Down

2. Person who writes (6)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Education Authority - who made the QUICK web site (6)
5. Connection to another web site (4)
6. Opposite of 10 down and 12 across (8)
9. The Information Superhighway (8)
10. Same as 12 across (4)



## 8. Does the site tell you about choices open to you?

Usually you have a choice. So, a good web site that is trying to give you advice will tell you all of these choices.

Imagine you had found a web site about getting fit.  
Think of five activities that the web site might tell you about.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....
5. ....

If the web site is going to be useful to you at all, it should tell you about all the choices available to you.

If it gives you advice, it should also give you some idea of what may happen if you follow this advice.



Never follow advice from the Internet without checking it with someone else first.