



Evaluating the Quality of Internet Materials

When you find websites which pertain to your assignment topic, consider such criteria as the author, the institution, the date of creation or revision, intended audience, and purpose of the information on the site.

Keep in mind that unlike many print sources, much information on the Internet is usually not subjected to any kind of filtering or reviewing process; virtually anyone can create a website on a given topic.

Use the following criteria as a guide when evaluating Web documents:

Authority of Web Documents

- Who wrote the Web page? What experience, education, credentials, past writings does the author have?
- Is there an e-mail address or contact address/phone number given for the author?
- Are there any “ABOUT” pages which tell you about the author or organization?
- Who published the document? Check the URL (Uniform Resource Locator) for clues as to the type of organization the site belongs to, or the country where it is located.

For example:

- professional association (.org)
- educational institution (ca or .ac.uk)
- commercial business (.com or .co.uk)
- government (.gov)
- country (ca. or uk etc. Sites from the US usually do not have a country code)

Accuracy of Web Documents

- What is the purpose of the document? Does it fulfill this purpose?
- Are sources stated for the information given? Is the information verifiable?
- What are the author’s qualifications?
- Is the document well-researched? Are there any obvious errors or omissions?
- Does the evidence cited support the claims and assumptions made?
- Remember there are no web standards to ensure accuracy.

Objectivity of Web Documents

- Why was the page created, and for whom? Is it advertising a product, or promoting a particular viewpoint?
- Is the information biased, or does the author present varied aspects of an issue?
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Currency of Web Documents

- When was the document produced?
- When was it most recently updated?
- How current are the links on the page?
- How many dead links are there?
- Is the information outdated?
- Web pages frequently come and go; always remember to make a note of the source's URL and the date you visited it, for your list of sources.

Coverage of Web Documents

- Does the information thoroughly cover the topic?
- Does it add anything new?
- Is it well-written?
- Who is the intended audience, and is it appropriate to your needs? i.e. is it too simple, too general, too advanced or too technical?
- Are the links evaluated? Are they appropriate to the topic?
- Is any special software required to access the material or is there a fee for access?
- Do the visual effects enhance, distract from, or take the place of content?

Remember to explore a variety of sources in order to get different perspectives.

For more information on evaluating Internet resources, see:

Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply and Questions to Ask (UC Berkeley Teaching Library Internet Workshops)

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html>