



Evaluating Internet Sources

There is a wealth of information available on the internet. Many students go online to find sources for their papers. However, students need to be careful about how credible these sources are. Published works go through a series of evaluations before getting printed, but information posted on the Web does not go through the same evaluation process. While browsing the internet is a quick and easy way to find information, anyone can have a website and the information found may be biased or erroneous. Here are some helpful tips to determine whether internet sources are reliable or not:

- Try to find **.gov** or **.edu** websites as opposed to **.com** websites, as **.com** sites are usually promoting or selling something. Be careful with sites ending in **.org** because they are often created by non-profit groups advocating their cause(s) and, therefore, often have biases.
- Look to see if the site has a **reputable sponsoring organization**. For example, any type of scientific or medical information should come from academic institutions, hospitals, or other professional medical or scientific research organizations.
- Even though **.edu sites** are sponsored by academic institutions, information found on them may not always be reliable. Sometimes students post their work on these sites for classes, and the information provided may not be accurate. Always make sure the information you want to use is from a scholar or professional in the field.
- Try to find information about the **author**. Does the site give the author's credentials? If you can't determine if the author's an expert on the topic, then the source is probably not appropriate for use in a college project.
- Try to determine the **purpose** of the site. Is it intended to advertise products, persuade audiences, or give valid information? If a site contains **advertisements**, chances are it is **not a credible source** because whoever has created the site does not have funding for it.
- Consider the **stance** of the site. Does it offer links to other websites, or does it only give one point of view? Your source should contain different points of view.
- Look for a **bibliography** or other documentation that shows where the information on the site originally came from. Proper documentation adds to the credibility of the author and/or organization.
- Look to see **when the site was last updated** to make sure it contains current and accurate information.



Remember, just because the internet is easily accessible does not mean it is reliable!

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