

## Evaluating the Credibility of Websites

Before using information you find on the internet for assignments and research, it is important to judge its accuracy and to establish that the information comes from a reliable and appropriate source.

Consider the following criteria and ask yourself the following questions:

### Audience

- Who is the website's intended audience? Academics? The general public? School children?
- Does it appropriately address the target audience?
- Is it relevant for your assignment or research?

### Authority

- Is the author identified? If the author has chosen to remain anonymous, ask yourself 'why?'
- Is the author a person you recognise as an expert in his field?
- If not, is there enough information provided to establish the author's credibility?
- Is she qualified to write about the subject?
- Can you find references to her elsewhere?
- Is the author affiliated to an academic institution or credible organisation?

If the information is part of a journal or other online publication, you should try to establish the authority of that publication:

- Is the name of the publication obvious?
- Are contact details and 'about' information provided?
- Do you recognise the name of the publisher?
- Does it look like a professional publication?
- Is there associated branding?
- Is the publication referenced elsewhere?

### Accuracy

- Is it free from spelling errors?
- Is the text well-written and grammatically correct?
- Has the content been through an editing process or been peer reviewed?
- Has the author included a bibliography?
- Are the sources cited reliable and can they be verified elsewhere?
- Are research methodologies adequately explained?

## Objectivity

- Does the author present objective arguments or make it clear when he is expressing biased opinions?
- Are other points of view explored?
- Is it a personal website? Does it express personal opinions?
- Is the website part of a commercial organisation, a political party or an organisation with a specific agenda? If yes, question the motives for publishing the information.
- Does the website promote a biased viewpoint?

## Currency

- Can you tell when the information was published?
- Is the information up to date?
- How frequently is the website updated?
- Are the links up to date and working?

A good website will show when it was 'last updated' or give a clear indication of the timeliness of the information. Working links indicate the website is being maintained and updated regularly.

## The URL

Look at the URL (web address) of the website. The domain name can help you establish if the information has been published by a credible source.

For example:

Domain	Published by
.org	an organisation
.edu	an academic website
.gov	the government
.com	Commercial and non-commercial websites. Be aware of a site's purpose and objectivity when analysing .com websites.

## Reliable sources

The Library provides access to a variety of reliable online resources. Key places to start your search for academic material online include:



EBSCOhost is a powerful online reference system offering a variety of proprietary full text and popular databases from leading information providers. Databases include; Academic Premier, Business Premier, Education Complete, Hospitality & Tourism Complete, MasterFILE (general reference) and, Regional Business News

Access via LMS/Library/Online Library Resources



*The Academic OneFile* database by GALE provides millions of articles from thousands of scholarly journals and other authoritative sources. With extensive coverage across academic disciplines you'll find accurate information and articles to support your studies.

Access via LMS/Library/Online Library Resources



*Informit* provides access to 8 research databases covering a wide range of subjects. Electronic content, which is sourced from publishers, associations and peak professional bodies, focuses on regional perspectives and includes contributions from international authors.

Access via LMS/Library/Online Library Resources



*SAGE Research Methods* is the ultimate methods library with more than 1000 books, reference works, journal articles, and instructional videos by world-leading academics from across the social sciences, including the largest collection of qualitative methods books available online from any scholarly publisher.

Access via LMS/Library/Online Library Resources



JSTOR is a highly selective digital library of academic content in many formats and disciplines. The collections include top peer-reviewed scholarly journals as well as respected literary journals, academic monographs, research reports from trusted institutes, and primary sources.

Access via LMS/Library/Online Library Resources

## Video Tutorials

Watch the following videos about how to evaluate websites



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZ1NZ4oGPMQ>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhwB4zQD4XA>