

Evaluating a website

Created by Inaburra Senior Library, 2017

Anyone can publish on the internet. You need to make sure the websites you're using for your assignments were created by experts and not by someone who knows absolutely nothing about the topic.

Remember to ask these questions before you use the information in a website, they will help you evaluate it for its trustworthiness.

Relevance

What topics are covered?

Is the information too easy for you or too hard for you?

How much detail does the website go into? Is there too much or too little information?

What do you need? Does the information meet that need?

Is the website easy to navigate and use?

Have you looked at a range of sources before deciding which is the best one for you to use?

Comparison

Does the information agree with the information you've found in other sources?

If it doesn't, think very carefully before using it because it might not be accurate.

Authority

Who is the author, publisher or company behind the website?

Are they an expert in the topic?

Is there contact information or other information about the author? (eg. their qualifications)

Currency

When was the website published?

Has it been revised or updated?

Do the links work?

If it's an old website, is it still useful to you?

Purpose

Who is the intended audience?

What is the purpose of the website? (Inform? Sell something? Persuade you of something? Entertainment?)

Does the author make their purpose clear?

Is the language intended to get an emotional reaction from you?

Does the point of view seem impartial and objective, or does it take sides?

What is the bias? Just because a website is biased doesn't mean it can't be useful to you, but you must be aware of what the bias is?

Does it make claims that sound too outlandish to be true?

Accuracy

Does the author say where they got their information from?

Is the information supported by evidence? (statistics, sources etc)

Are the spelling and grammar correct? Are there typos?

Is there a reference list?

Has the information been edited or reviewed?

Does it go against conventional knowledge and research?

URL

Does the url end in .edu (educational) or .gov (government)? Usually these mean that a website is reliable.