

# Evaluating Web Sites

## Using Internet Search Technologies



The Internet is an incredible resource of information. However, not all of the information found is written by reliable sources. Web sites often contain biased, inaccurate, or incomplete information. The reader must critically evaluate the information found. Start with the first query and then proceed to each of the following queries. Your preference in their order may vary depending on your audience and purpose. Our suggestion is to use them in the following order for practice. If you find a negative response to any one step that cannot be overlooked - then move on to another web site to evaluate. With practice this process will become "second nature" as you read web information.

### 1. Is It A Quick Match?

The first observation is a quick skimming of the site. If, at first glance, the website's purpose matches your purpose, then go on to next query.

Yes	No
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### 2. Who's the Author?

Who wrote the information? Can you contact the author?  
(The author should provide an email address or contact phone number.)

Yes	No
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### 3. Who Is Supporting This Site?

Make a mental note of the URL (Uniform Resource Locator).

Yes	No
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That's the address in the browser's locator window. Take a close look at the domain name. All of these may have accurate, complete, non-biased information, but you need the "heads-up" of who is publishing the site!

**.edu** - educational institutions  
**.org** - nonprofit organizations  
**.gov** - government institutions  
**.com** - commercial businesses  
**.mil** - military organizations  
**.net** - network providers

### 4. What Is the Purpose of this Site?

Is the content bias free or can you clearly recognize the bias.  
Is the purpose of the site to share facts or opinions about the subject?

Yes	No
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### 5. Is the Information You Are Looking For Really There?

Does the content follow your objectives and purpose?  
Will the readers be able to locate the information readily?  
Can the information be verifiable and/or replicated?

Yes	No
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### 6. Is the Content Current?

Check for timeliness. Some documents put on the web just yesterday may have data from years before; this is especially true in the area of science where data changes so quickly. You want your information/data to be current!

Yes	No
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### 7. Can My Audience Read It?

Are there key words in the title, frames, and links that will help in navigating the site?  
Is the print size reasonable for my audience?  
Does it have pictures, graphics or tables that help clarify the text?  
Is the information clearly labeled?  
Is the readability level within the audience's range of reading comprehension?

Yes	No
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### 8. Is It Easy to Navigate?

How long did the page take to load?  
Can you go back and forth in the document?  
Do the links work?  
If you go to another page, can you get back?

Yes	No
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### 9. It's A Match!

If you answered yes to your priority questions, then the web site you are evaluating will be an excellent addition to your resource list!

Yes	No
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# THE FIVE W'S OF WEB SITE EVALUATION

## WHO

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?

## WHAT

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?

## WHEN

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

## WHERE

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

## WHY

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