

Criteria for Evaluating Internet Resources

The following checklist presents questions to ask to help determine whether a Web page is a suitable resource for a research paper, or not. Don't expect to be able to answer all the questions, all the time, for all Web sites you look at. Rather, try to use the questions as a tool to help you look at Web pages critically.

Author or Source

- Is there an author of the work? If so, is the author clearly identified?
- Are the author's credentials for writing on this topic stated?
- Is the author affiliated with an organization?
- Does the site or page represent a group, organization, institution, corporation or government body?
- Is there a link back to the organization's page or a way to contact the organization or the author to verify the credibility of the site (address, phone number, email address)?
- Is it clear who is responsible for the creation and/or maintenance of the site or page?

Accuracy

- Is this page part of an edited or peer-reviewed publication?
- Can factual information be verified through footnotes or bibliographies to other credible sources?
- Based on what you already know about the subject, or have checked from other sources, does this information seem credible?
- Is it clear who has the responsibility for the accuracy of the information presented?

Currency

- Is there a date stating when the document was originally created?
- Is it clear when the site or page was last updated, revised or edited?
- Are there any indications that the material is updated frequently or consistently to ensure currency of the content?
- If there are links to other Web pages are they current?

Objectivity

- Is the page free of advertising? If the page does contain advertising, are the ads clearly separated from the content?
- Does the page display a particular bias or perspective? Or is the information presented factually, without bias?
- Is it clear and forthcoming about its view of the subject?
- Does it use inflammatory or provocative language?

Coverage

- Is there any indication that the page is complete and is not still under construction?
- If there is a print equivalent to the Web page, is there clear indication of whether the entire work or only a portion is available on the Web?

Purpose

- What is the primary purpose of the page? To sell a product? To make a political point? To have fun? To parody a person, organization or idea?
- Is the page or site a comprehensive resource or does it focus on a narrow range of information?
- What is the emphasis of the presentation? Technical, scholarly, clinical, popular, elementary, etc.