

Evaluating Web Pages

Anyone can publish information on the Web if they have the skills, the software and the hardware. You need to be discerning in what you use in your research, not all Web resources are valuable or reliable. When using resources from the Web it is necessary to develop skills to evaluate the authority and appropriateness of what you find. Here are some criteria which should be applied when deciding whether a web page is a suitable resource or not.

Authorship and Publishing Body

Who published the document?

Does the site or page represent a group, organisation, institution, corporation or government body?

Check the URL. Is the domain: edu or ac (education), gov (government), org (non-profit and research organisations), com (commercial) or net (network related - usually commercial)?

Does the page provide a contact email, address or phone number?

Did you link to this site from another site or document you recognize and trust?

Is the author of the document named? Is the author a well known and regarded name in your field of study?

Currency

When was the page produced? Has the page been updated?

Are the links up to date? Are there any dead links?

Is the information on the page current?

Is the page/site stable? Will the page be there tomorrow?

Audience, Coverage, and Scope

What is the purpose of the document? Why was it produced? Who is the intended audience?

What is the breadth of the work? General or focused?

What is the emphasis? technical, clinical, elementary, scholarly, popular etc.?

Is advertising included on the site? If so what sort of impact does it have on the content and scope of the page?

Does the site combine educational and research information with commercial marketing?

Does this create a bias?

Referral to other sources

Does the page refer to other resources?

Do these include print and other non-Internet resources or only Internet resources?

If a selected list of resources is given is there any explanation of how these resources were chosen?

Are the selected resource links evaluated in any way?

Structure and style

Are there options for text only and no frames views of the page?

Are alternative text tags provided for images which appear on the page?

Are references provided cited correctly?