

Writing with the Right Stuff: Evaluating Internet Web Sites

It is important to evaluate each web site to determine its credibility because the Internet is unregulated and anyone can post information. Use the following guidelines to determine if a web site is a reliable source of information.

<p><u>Authority</u></p> <p>Who created the web site?*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What information is provided about the person? Are they an expert in their field?• To what domain does the site belong (.edu, .gov, .org, .com, etc.)? The first two are the most reliable sources of information because they are educational or governmental in nature.	<p><u>Content</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What kind of evidence is the author using to support his/her arguments or ideas? Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?▪ How current is the website? How often is it updated?▪ Does the site contain advertising? If it does the site may be more interested in selling their product or generating revenue than guaranteeing accurate information
<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is the purpose of the web site? When conducting research look for web sites that have factual, objective information that can be backed up by other sources (with references/works cited and/or links to other websites)	<p><u>Audience</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Who is the intended audience?▪ How is this reflected in the organization and presentation of the site?

***Works Cited Information:** A reliable website includes information about the author(s) or organization posting the information and date(s) when the information was published on the web or last updated. Caution: some websites automatically update with the current date to appear up-to-date. Think twice about using a website if you cannot find author and publication information.

A few words about Wikipedia: Wikipedia is not a good source of information; however, the references at the bottom of some entries may lead you to reliable websites.

A few words about YouTube: If looking for a visual aid to use in a class presentation the criteria above can be used to determine if the video is from a reputable source.

A few words about blogs: Blogs, or weblogs, are 21st C. Internet developments and can be posted by anyone from a major newspaper reporter to your neighbor down the street. Blogs can be personal or professional in nature. Again, use the criteria above to determine if the blogger is a credible source.

A few words about Google Advanced Search: To limit your results to educational and governmental websites: Go to the Google website and click on Advanced Search. Type in your keywords in the search box and type '.edu, .gov' in the 'Search within a site or domain' box.

If you don't have time to worry about the reliability of websites, use the online resources available through GALILEO: www.galileo.usg.edu funded by the state of Georgia.