

Evaluating Web Sites

Student Worksheet

When we use information, we need that information to come from a trusted (reliable) source.



-If we use a book, then the author is listed. The author's credentials are often listed somewhere in the book. We also know the publisher. A book will go through many editing sessions before it is published. Facts and dates are checked and rechecked.

-If you find a magazine or journal article, then the article has been checked and edited, as well. Usually there is an author listed, along with some information about the author and why they are qualified to write the article.



-But, if you find a web site, you need to know if it is a good site, or just junk. There is no editing done on the World Wide Web; anyone can put up a site. So, we need to ask questions about the site.

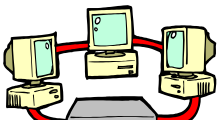
Use the following questions to assist you in beginning your evaluation of each web site—the good, the bad, and the ugly!

1. Is there an author? Who is it?
2. Are they qualified to comment on the topic?
3. Who is the sponsor of the site?
4. Is there contact information available for the author, the sponsor, or the webmaster?

Another clue in the hunt for a valuable web site is the domain name, which comes at the end of the first string in a URL. For instance, an education site's url will end in *.edu*. The domain name for a United States government site will be *.gov*. What follows are some domain names and what they mean:



.mil (US military)



.net (computer network)

.int (international organization)

-NAFTA
-UN, etc

.com (for profit company) 

.org (not for profit organization)

-PETA
-MADD
-Goodwill, etc.

.jp, .ru, .ca, .au, etc. (country identifiers)



5. What is the domain name, and what does it mean?
6. What does that tell you about the site?

Now, let's look at the information on the website, and see if it can pass a few tests. This is called checking on the scope of the web site. The following questions may be harder to answer, and the only way to be able to answer them is to have done a bit of prior "digging" on your topic. Check information in an encyclopedia or journal article, and see if the information on the web site agrees with more reputable types of information.



7. Is the information accurate?
8. Is the information a fact or just someone's opinion?
9. Is the information there to try to make you believe something?
10. Are they trying to sell you something?

For the following questions, you can find the answers at the bottom of the home page, so scroll down and see. If they are not willing to tell you who is responsible for the site, how current the site is, and the site's purpose, then be careful.

11. What is the purpose of the web site? (That should be clearly stated on the home page of the site.)
12. How often is the site updated?
13. Is there a date listed? If so, what is it?
14. How old is the site?
15. Is an author or webmaster listed?
16. Is contact information available? Like an e-mail address?



The last set of questions has to do with getting around the site (navigation).



17. Does the site come up fast?
18. Can you find everything? Are there a lot of links and pop up advertisements?
19. Is it too flashy or not flashy enough?
20. Does everything open, or do you need special tools to see a picture or video?
21. Is the site there regularly? (Some are here today gone tomorrow, "under construction".)



or constantly