

Internet Know-How – How to Research

Evaluating Internet resources is important to make sure information you are viewing is accurate, up-to-date and credible before you use it.

The purpose of the site should be clear. The content and style should let you know who the intended audience is for.

Knowing who the author of the web site is can help you decide whether the person has any expertise in the area. Looking at the URL (uniform resource locator) ending will tell you if it is a government (.gov), educational (.edu), or commercial (.com) site

When you are gathering information on the Internet don't take it for granted that it is accurate. Make sure you look for evidence of bias. If the point of view is one-sided there could be a hidden agenda for the author creating the site. It is also important to check the currency of the site. Check that the date of last update is current enough before you use it.

If the site is well organized, the content clear and up-to-date, and the author's name and credentials are provided; chances are the material will be accurate.

1. Accuracy – Is the information clear and free from errors? A lot of spelling or grammatical errors is a sign that the website is probably not reliable. Remember anyone can publish on the Web and you want to make sure that the information you receive is reliable.
2. Authority - Is the editor of the information listed? If you do not see a copyright symbol or the credentials of the author you may want to question the accuracy of the information. Usually credible authors will list their qualifications and be supported by the publisher of the web page.
3. Objectivity – Is the information presented in a way that presents both sides of an issue or doesn't try to change your opinion? If it seems like the person is giving only their opinion on a subject, they probably are.
4. Currency – Is the content up-to-date and last publication date clearly labeled? If you do not find a date when the site was last updated you might want to stay clear of it. The information should show when the page was first written or placed on the Web and when it was revised last.
5. Content – Is the content covered completely showing who the intended audience should be? If the site is organized and the information has a logical flow it likely has more credibility.

Watch out for web pages that are marketed for their advertising or are a blend of entertainment, information, and advertising. The original intent of the website may not be to give information but to have click on an advertisement and be the “1 millionth customer”. Make sure that the links on the website are also reliable and not independent of the home page. Watch out for websites that can be edited. Wikipedia is not always a reliable source. Be sure to check the citations.

Create a table like the one below. Choose a topic. Go to five different web pages about that topic and evaluate them using the criteria above.

Topic: _____

Web Address	Accuracy	Authority	Objectivity	Currency	Content