Checklist for Evaluating Websites

When you search the Web, you're going to find a lot of information...some of it useful, some of it not. However, there are a few questions you can ask yourself to determine the credibility and integrity of a website. Remember: when you're evaluating any site, a skeptical attitude is the best approach: think critically about what you're looking at, and its relation to your research purpose. Make that website work to gain your trust! Here are some aspects of evaluating websites to keep in mind:

Title of the Website _____

URL _____

Currency: The timeliness of the website.

The frequency of updated information is more important for some websites than others. For example, websites that provide historical information do not have to be updated as often as sites that provide news stories.

Tip: Check the top or bottom of a webpage to look for the creation and/or revision date.

Is there a date given for when the site was created? ☐ Yes ☐ No   Date given _____

Is there a date that shows when the site was last updated? ☐ Yes ☐ No   Date given _____

Are links functional and up-to-date? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Relevance: The importance of the information for your needs.

It's crucial for website content to be applicable towards your research needs. Having a weak connection, or finding information at a level not suitable for your search (for example, information too advanced or not advanced enough), undermines your argument.

Tip: Determine the intended audience for a website by looking at the language it uses. Generally, the more sophisticated the terminology, the more advanced the information.

Does the information relate to your topic/question? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the information at an appropriate level? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Could you find the same or better information from another source? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you feel comfortable citing this source in a research paper? ☐ Yes ☐ No

- • Currency
- • Relevance
- • Authority
- • Accuracy
- • Purpose

Sources consulted:

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"Evaluating Information: Applying the CRAAP Test." Meriam Library, California State University, Chico, 17 Sept. 2010. Web. <https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf>.

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Authority: The source of the information.

Anybody can put anything on the Web at any time. It's very important to find out the author's identity and his or her qualifications or expertise on the subject matter in order to determine the credibility and reliability of the information.

Tip: To find out more about the author, look at the links: "About Us", "FAQ", "Background", "Biography", etc.

Is it clear who the author/creator/sponsor of the website is?	☐ Yes ☐ No Name _____
Does the individual/organization list their qualifications or credentials?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If there is no personal author, is a publisher or institution provided along with contact information?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content.

Since anyone can publish a website, you need to be able to identify the author and go to their resource materials to check their work.

Tip: Make sure the information in the website is accurate and verifiable by checking out the links it provides.

Can you verify the information from other sources or personal knowledge?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are the original sources of information listed?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does the language or tone seem biased?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are there spelling, grammar, or other typos?	☐ Yes ☐ No
If there are links to other pages, are they reliable sources?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Purpose: The reason the website exists/The presence of bias or prejudice.

Look for sites that present information with a minimum of bias and without the intention to persuade. Take the time to thoroughly explore a website to determine if the information is mostly subjective (biased or opinionated), objective (factual), or mixed.

Tip: Looking at the URL of the site will help you determine its purpose. Determine the aim of the author or organization publishing the site by reviewing their "About Us" or "Mission Statement" page.

Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Is advertising content vs. informational content easily distinguishable?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases?	☐ Yes ☐ No