Criteria for Evaluating Websites

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Currency
Is the information up-to-date? Remember that just because the webpage has been updated recently, that
doesn’t mean that all of the information on the webpage has necessarily been updated. Cross check the
information with other sources.

Accuracy
Current information is more likely to be accurate, but not always. Even if it is current, be sure to cross check
the information with other sources.

Coverage
Does the website cover the topic thoroughly, and is it comprehensive? If not, do you have other sources you
can use to fill in the gaps in coverage? Be sure the source has the kind of coverage of the topic that you want
before you decide to use it.

Authority
Who authored the content on the web page? What are their credentials? Are they an expert in the field?
Depending upon how you are using this information, you want to be sure that the author is a credible and
reliable source of information in the field. One way to determine this is to look at what kinds of websites link
to the website you are evaluating. The more credible and authoritative those websites are, the more credible
and authoritative the one you are evaluating is likely to be.

Host
Is the host a reputable organization or individual? Remember, the author is not always the host of the website.
The author could have some sort of sponsor, and that could mean that there were terms that he/she had to
agree to in order to publish on that site. When evaluating for authority, pay attention to the website host or
sponsor in addition to the actual author.

Objectivity
Does the information reflect an author’s bias? If the author has a position, is it well reasoned and argued and
supported by empirical evidence? If you are going to use a source that is biased, you want to make sure that
the position reflected is supported by ample evidence. You also want to acknowledge any bias in your paper or
article.

Relevancy
Is the information related to the topic you are researching? You may find something to be interesting, but
make sure it has a place in your main argument.

Functionality
Is the website easy to navigate and use? You may find good information on a website, but if it’s very messy and
difficult to find that information, it would make it difficult for your readers to later trace those citations and
figure out the exact source and location of the information that you used.

Ads
If the website has a lot of ads (especially if they are particularly prominent or distracting), you may not want
to use it as a source. The information may be accurate and authoritative, but the appearance may undermine
its credibility. Remember, what will your lecturer or readers think of this website? What does it say about a
source of information if it contains advertisements for commercial products and services, for example? Many
people might think the information is biased, even if it is not.