

6 Criteria for Websites

These six criteria deal with the content of Web sites rather than the graphics or site design. Apply these criteria when you research on the internet.

1. AUTHORITY

Authority reveals that the person, institution or agency responsible for a site has the qualifications and knowledge to do so. Evaluating a web site for authority:

- Authorship: It should be clear who developed the site.
- **Contact information** should be clearly provided: e-mail address, snail mail address, phone number, and fax number.
- Credentials: the author should state qualifications, credentials, or personal background that gives them authority to present information.
- Check to see if the site supported by an organization or a commercial body

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the information presented in the site should be clear. Some sites are meant to inform, persuade, state an opinion, entertain, or parody something or someone. Evaluating a web site for purpose:

- Does the content support the purpose of the site?
- Is the information geared to a specific audience (students, scholars, general reader)?
- Is the site organized and focused?
- Are the outside links appropriate for the site?
- Does the site evaluate the links?
- [Check the domain of the site](#). The URL may indicate its purpose.

3. COVERAGE

It is difficult to assess the extent of coverage since depth in a site, through the use of links, can be infinite. One author may claim comprehensive coverage of a topic while another may cover just one aspect of a topic. Evaluating a web site for coverage:

- Does the site claim to be selective or comprehensive?
- Are the topics explored in depth?
- Compare the value of the site's information compared to other similar sites.
- Do the links go to outside sites rather than its own?
- Does the site provide information with no relevant outside links?

4. CURRENCY

Currency of the site refers to: 1) how current the information presented is, and 2) how often the site is updated or maintained. It is important to know when a site was created, when it was last updated, and if all of the links are current. Evaluating a web site for currency involves finding the date information was:

- first written
- placed on the web
- last revised

Then ask if:

- Links are up-to-date
- Links provided should be reliable. Dead links or references to sites that have moved are not useful.
- Information provided so trend related that its usefulness is limited to a certain time period?
- the site been under construction for some time?

5. OBJECTIVITY

Objectivity of the site should be clear. Beware of sites that contain bias or do not admit its bias freely. Objective sites present information with a minimum of bias. Evaluating a web site for objectivity:

- Is the information presented with a particular bias?
- Does the information try to sway the audience?
- Does site advertising conflict with the content?
- Is the site trying to explain, inform, persuade, or sell something?

6. ACCURACY

There are few standards to verify the accuracy of information on the web. It is the responsibility of the reader to assess the information presented. Evaluating a web site for accuracy:

- Reliability: Is the author affiliated with a known, respectable institution?
- References: do statistics and other factual information receive proper references as to their origin?
- Does the reading you have already done on the subject make the information seem accurate?
- Is the information comparable to other sites on the same topic?
- Does the text follow basic rules of grammar, spelling and composition?
- Is a bibliography or reference list included?