Evaluating Websites

Websites contain information from people with varying motivation and expertise. Anyone can create a publicly-accessible website, so you need to have ways to verify that the information is reliable. The questions below will guide you in critically evaluating websites to ensure that they are appropriate for your use.

**AUTHORITY AND CREDIBILITY**

- Who is the author of the information?
- What expertise do they have on the topic?

**Find out by looking for:**

- The website’s domain (.com, .edu, .gov, etc.)
- More information on the homepage of the website, such as an About or Contact page
- A copyright symbol, ©, at the bottom of the page to see who claims the copyright to the website
- Information about the author or organization in other resources, such as the Better Business Bureau’s website, which has information about businesses and charities

**ACCURACY**

- If the author did not discover or create the information provided, are trustworthy sources cited?
- Are there obvious errors on the website?

**Find out by looking for:**

- A list of citations showing the original source of the information
- Grammatical or typographical errors
- Broken or outdated links

**TIMELINESS**

- Has the website been updated recently?
- When was the information on the site created?

**Find out by looking for:**

- Dates at the top or bottom of the page
- Current or recent works in the citations
Bias Vs. Objectivity

- Is the website sponsored or created by an organization that has a particular agenda?
- Is the purpose of the site to sell, educate, or persuade?
- Does the author present information as fact, opinion, or conjecture?
- Is more than one viewpoint or opinion expressed?

Find out by looking for:

- The tone and content of the website, including the About page
- Advertisements or sales gimmicks
- Variety in the opinions expressed

Relevance and Appropriateness

- Does the website provide information that you need?

Find out by looking for:

- Information that can support your assignment
- Uniqueness compared to other sources you have found