

Using a Web Site? Evaluate! How Does It Rate?

Below is a list of standard evaluation criteria commonly used to evaluate the reliability of Web sites.

To aid you in this evaluation, consider these additional tools:

1. The domain name contained in a URL or address of a web page indicates where the site is coming from and can help you evaluate a web site:
 - noctrl.edu - North Central College, an education institution
 - nra.org - National Rifle Association, a nonprofit organization
 - Amazon.com - a commercial site
 - census.gov - U.S. Census Bureau, a government site
2. Who owns the Web site? Find valuable information about the registered owner of the site by searching the URL in the Whois Database
http://www.networksolutions.com/en_US/whois/index.jhtml
3. What other Web sites link to this web site/page? Do you find sites that are not related to the site you are evaluating? What do they say about it? Using any standard search engine, type into the search box link: followed by the URL of the Web site you are evaluating. (link:noctrl.edu)
4. Evaluate the Web site's credibility by answering the following questions:

Authority

- Who provided the information?
- What are the author's credentials?
- Is there a copyright statement?
- What organization or institution does he represent?
- Is the organization's address, phone number and mission statement clearly stated?
- What is their reputation as an information provider?
- Does the information provider have the authority or expertise to provide information on that topic?

Currency

- When was the material written?
- Does currency or lack of currency affect the material?
- Is the information provided for current information or for historical purposes?
- When was the last update of the information?

Coverage

- Is the Web page complete, or still under construction?
- Does it really address your topic? Is it relevant?
- Is the intended topic of the Web page clearly stated?
- Has the topic been fully covered or are there gaps in the information provided?

Objectivity

- What is the site host's motivation? Profit? Education? Furthering a personal agenda?
- Is it objective, but with a hidden argumentative purpose - carefully selected evidence peppered with biased language or information?
- Exploratory - Objective explanation of several different views?
- Deliberately argumentative - Does it take an obvious position on a controversial issue?
- Extremist or biased - emotional language, extreme examples, associated with extremist groups?

Accuracy

- Does this Web page contain proven, verifiable facts and information?
- Are the sources of the information clearly documented?
- Are there errors in spelling and grammar?