

Web Evaluation

How do you evaluate an online resource there's a lot of information on the Internet and that all of it is accurate or unbiased anyone can create a website and there are many reasons why people do so how can we tell if the information on a website is reliable or not a good researcher or consumer of information should question and evaluate their sources one way to do this is by using the five W's who what when where and why let's start with the who ask yourself who published the website and are they qualified when looking at the site is it clear who the author is look for an About Us frequently asked questions background or biography section if there's not a personal name attached to the site is there information about the publisher or the organization has the author provided contact information name email address or phone number if the website provides a way to get in touch with them to ask a question about their content it's a sign of a more professional credible site does the individual or organization listed qualifications or credentials is the author qualified to act as an authority on the subject you need to look for the author's educational background or job experience do they have special knowledge about the topic you're researching are they an expert in the field should we believe their information next question we need to ask is what what is the purpose of the site understood the purpose of a site can help us determine if the information on it may be biased bias means be prejudiced in favor or against one thing person group compared with another so read the information on the page carefully is the website trying to sell something or is it trying to persuade the reader to a point of view or they're just providing facts sometimes there will be a paragraph about the purpose of the site look around for a mission statement but you will probably have to decide yourself by reading the information on the webpage if they are selling something or trying to persuade you you should consider the information may be biased that doesn't always mean the information is unusable but you may have to search out other points of view on us different source to get the whole story on the subject what does this up the website look like is a professional looking or does it look like a personal site are there any spelling or grammar errors how will a website is put together can be an indication of the quality of their information check out the links on the site do they connect to other sources that look reputable if not you might want to look for a better source next question is when when was the website last updated look for a site date at the top or the bottom of the homepage this will indicate when the website was last updated if the information is old or there's no date provided how can you tell if the information is still reliable statistics that are not dated are the same as an anonymous information depending on what you're researching this may or may not be important if you're researching a scientific topic you would want the most update information if you're researching a historic topic the date might not be that important next thing you need to ask is where where is the information coming from where did the author get his information if the information is not original resource look for citations or a bibliography for where the author got his information or look for resource links and follow them to see if they go to reputable websites also the websites URL is address on the Internet can tell you a lot about the content of the website different suffixes in the URLs can tell you about where the information is coming from a dot edu in that URL is from an educational institution such as a college or school just be careful it's not a student's class project if you see the words user or a simple it's a little line called a tilled the URL it means it's a personal webpage it should be looked at closely a.gov in the URL means it comes from a government agency it can probably be trusted dot org in the URL means it's from an organization and if the organization is reputable their information is also probably good a dot-com comes from a commercial website and is probably trying to sell something be careful look closer for bias last verb double use is why why is this information useful for my research after looking at the other four WS ask [writing in law enforcement](#) yourself why should I use this website why is this information useful why is this website a better source of information than another now you are prepared to search the internet for reliable information you know the questions you should ask and what information you should look for when evaluating an online source just remember to use your five.