



Guideposts for Evaluating Web Sites

How authoritative is the site?

- It is clear who is sponsoring the page?
- Is there a link to a page describing the goals of the sponsor?
- Is there a way to verify the group, organization, or businesses' legitimacy? For example, is there a phone number or address to contact for more information?
- Is there a statement that the content of the page has the official approval of the organization?
- If posted by an organization, is it clear whether the page is from the national headquarters or a local affiliate?
- Is there a statement listing the organization as copyright holder?
- If the author of particular information is listed, what are his or her qualifications?
- Is the treatment of the subject appropriate for what it purports to be? In other words, if it is a serious research it should outline the methodology used, list sources, and offer a bibliography.
- Is it well written?
- What is the purpose of the web Page? Is there information that should be there but is not?
- Go back and revisit the site. Is it stable, or has it disappeared?

How accurate is the site?

- Are the sources for factual information clearly listed so that they can be verified?
- Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors?
- Always check the "home page" to evaluate the site.

How objective is the site?

- Are the organization's biases clearly stated?
- If there is any advertising or editorial material on the page, is it clearly differentiated from the informational content?
- Is the information presented with a minimum of bias?
- Is it contradicted, or corroborated, by "expert commentary, peer-reviewed papers, [and] standard references" available on the Internet and elsewhere?
- Backtrack, that is, remove files or folders from right to left one by one until you get to the base URL of the sponsoring entity. This process will let you find related sites and folders.

How current is the site?

- Are there dates on the page to indicate:
 - When the page was written? When the page was first placed on the web? When the page was last revised? When the research occurred? Are the links up to date?

How thorough is the site?

- Does the site seem complete, or is still under construction?
- Is it clear what topics the page intends to address?

- Does it succeed, or has something significant been left out?
- Is the point of view of the organization presented clearly, with arguments well supported?

With whom does it link?

- Web sites should be evaluated independently [i.e., some Holocaust deniers intentionally link to credible sites so as to create the misimpression that they are engaged in a “debate”].