



Evaluating Web Sites

While the internet is a very powerful tool for research, it must be used wisely because it is like a huge party with no one guarding the door—anyone can come inside without meeting a standard. So, before we rely on any source for information, we must evaluate it according to the following criteria.



Currency of information	Accuracy of information	Relevancy of information	Ease of access and use of resource	Support of resource
How recent is the information and when was the last update of the site?	Can you confirm the information elsewhere? Is the website serious and reputable?	Is the material closely-related to your topic of study?	Is the web site easy to use and understand? Does it download quickly?	Who is responsible for the source? What is linked to and from the site?

*By thinking about these eight aspects and ranking your site, you can determine if it is a good resource or not. Who **CARES**? I do, and you do because we want to make sure the work we do is accurate, honest, and useful. So let's learn how to do this the right way.*

How **current** is the information?

1. Currency of Information 3 2 1

Steps:

- Look at the top and bottom of the article or section of the website that contains your information.
- Is there an obvious date on the information? If so, rank the site "3."
- If the date is there but was not easy to find, rank the site a "2."
- If there is no date at all, rank the site a "1."

2. Last Update 3 2 1

Steps:

- Scroll to the bottom of the page.
- Look for a date last updated.
- If it's there, rank the site a "3" for this section.
- If it's not there, type this into the address bar: `javascript: document.lastModified`
- Press Enter. If a date other than today comes up, rank the site a "2" for this section.
- If you get today's date and cannot find a date last updated, rank the site a "1" for this section.

How **accurate** is the information?

3. Confirmation of Information 3 2 1

Steps:

- Look for a bibliography on the site that lists print resources.
- If they are listed, see if you can find one and confirm the information. If so, rank it a "3"
- If there are no print bibliographic resources or you can't find them but you can confirm the information based on at least one print source or two other web sources, rank it a "2."
- If you cannot confirm the information, rank the site a "1."

4. Seriousness 3 2 1

Steps:

- Look at the address for the site.
 - Is it from a school/university? (.edu) government (.gov)? organization (.org)?
- Look at the language? Is it academic or goofy? Are there typos or other errors?
- Think about the purpose of the site. Is the creator trying to: Inform users about a topic, provide news, sell a product, advocate an idea or item (persuade users), or entertain?
- If you determine that the site is serious and is trying to inform or provide news, rank it a “3.” Otherwise, rank it a “2” or “1” based on if you think it is trying to sell, persuade, or entertain.

How **relevant** is the information?

5. Relationship of Topic and Information 2 1 0

Steps:

- Look at your site and decide how well the information fits into your topic and if it has enough information about all parts of your topic. Rank it a “2,” “1,” or “0” based on your assessment.

How **easy** is the information to find and use?

6. Accessibility 2 1 0

Steps:

- Browse the site and decide how easy it is to use. Does it have a search tool? Can you find what you need quickly? Does it download without a long wait? Rank it based on your assessment.

Who **supports** this site and its information?

7. Responsibility 3 2 1

Steps:

- Find the author of your section or of the site as a whole. Try scrolling to the bottom and looking for names (look for the word “Webmaster” followed by a name.) If you do find an author of your section of information (or article) *and* of the site as a whole *easily*, rank the site a “3.”
- If you can’t find an author of your section and/or aren’t sure where to find who is responsible for the site, try to find an “About Us” or a “Contact Us” button. Those pages should have more information about the site. If there is more information there about who is responsible for the site, rank the site a “2.”
- If you cannot find who is responsible for the site even after digging around, rank it a “1.”

8. Connections 3 2 1

Steps:

- Does the site provide a “links” section? If so, browse some of the links. See if they are credible based on the criteria in #4. Do they provide more information for you?
- To find out who links to the site, go to Alexa (<http://www.alexa.com>), type the web address of the site into the search box, and press Enter.
- Under “Site Stats,” you will “other sites that link to the site.” Click the number to see them.
- If the sites that link to and from this site are serious and credible, rank the site a “3.” If you think they are but aren’t sure, rank it a “2.” If you can’t find any links to or from the site, rank it a “1.”

Add your scores down the right hand side of the page.

Total Score: _____

What the scores mean:

22-18: Definitely use this site! It can be a main resource for you.	17-13: Use this site but not as your main source. Aim higher.	12-0: Don’t use this site. Look for better sources.
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