

EVALUATING ONLINE RESOURCES

URL _____

Ask Yourself	✓ "Yes"	Details and Comments
Trustworthiness of the Author		
Is the page's domain extension .edu, .net, .org, .mil, or .gov? <i>Tips:</i> Anyone can use a .org extension, not just nonprofit organizations. If there is a country code, be extra careful.		
Is the publisher of the site an organization you have heard of before? <i>Tip:</i> Look at the server name in the URL, between the http:// and the next /. If the domain name is a commercial Internet service provider (for example, AOL, Earthlink, mac.com) then the page is likely to be a personal page. Personal pages are not endorsed or reviewed by any organization.		
Is the author identified by name? <i>Tip:</i> If you see a tilde (~) in the URL followed by a personal name, it may be a personal site, not an official site.		
Does the author provide his or her professional or educational background?		
Does the author's background match the topic of the page (for example, you might not want to use a page about sports medicine written by a rocket scientist)?		
Has the site received any respected awards?		
Is this site recommended by a site you trust (for example, a public library or a well-known newspaper)?		
Can the author or organization be contacted if you have questions? <i>Tip:</i> Look for "contact" links to an e-mail address, street address, and/or phone number.		
Do other trustworthy sites link to this one? <i>Tip:</i> Paste the URL into the search box at Alexa.com to see who links to this site.		
Do trustworthy sources have positive things to say about this author or source? <i>Tip:</i> To find out, Google the author or organization's name and read what others have to say.		
Can you find another source to confirm what the author says about him or herself? <i>Tip:</i> Google the name of the author and a related keyword from the site (for example, "John Smith" and "professor").		

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Purpose of the Site		
Can you tell if the site is fact or opinion? (If the information seems one-sided, or biased, you will have to go elsewhere to find the other side of the issue.)		
Are you reasonably sure this site is not a parody or intended to be humorous?		
Is the tone calm and fair? (Sites that are hateful and angry may not be good sources of information.)		
Is the site free of advertising?		
If there are ads, is it easy to tell the difference between ads and content?		
Is the site sponsored by any organizations? (The type of organization should give you clues to possible biases.)		
Is it clear what audience the site is intended for (for example, college students or young children)?		
Are you a member of the intended audience? <i>Tip:</i> Don't use a site created for young children to write a high school paper.		
Is the site open to everyone (no age requirements, fees, passwords, or registration)?		
Accuracy of Information		
Are sources provided for all the facts and statistics?		
Are there links to these sources?		
Is there a bibliography?		
Is the date the article, page, or site was created given?		
Is the "last revised" date given?		
Is the date of the facts and information recent enough to be accurate? <i>Tip:</i> Try looking for the same facts on another site to make sure you've found the most recent version.		
Is the site free of spelling, typographical, and grammatical errors? If the author didn't check the spelling, you can be pretty sure the facts were not checked, either!		
Do all the links lead to active pages (in other words, no dead links)?		

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Ease of Use		
Is the text understandable?		
Do the titles and headings give a clear idea of the content?		
Is there a "what's new" feature?		
Is there a site map?		
Is there a tool for searching the site?		
Do pages load quickly?		
Are there links to other places within this page or Web site?		
Usefulness of Information		
Does this site have enough information for your research project?		
Is most of the information useful for your research? If not, it may be hard to find what you do need.		

What conclusions have you reached about the quality of this site for research?