

EVALUATING INTERNET SOURCES

Use the following criteria to evaluate Internet sites for scholarly research purposes. Examine your source by answering each of the following questions. Then, review each “no” and decide whether the integrity of the source is compromised by the source’s failure to meet the standard. This list is not exhaustive; it is meant to serve as a guide to help you identify the ideal source.

Authority and Creditability		
Is the author named?	Yes	No
Is the author’s contact information provided?	Yes	No
Is the author affiliated with, or sponsored by, any known institution?	Yes	No
Are the author’s credentials included, or is information given to establish that this author or sponsor is an expert on the subject?	Yes	No
Is the site a “brand name?” Some names are known for reliability: Time Magazine, Houghton Mifflin Publishers, Library of Congress, etc.	Yes	No
If the document is from a periodical, is the document peer-reviewed?	Yes	No
Is the homepage host credible? See “Top Level Domain Names” below.	Yes	No
Is the document’s purpose to inform? If the purpose is to persuade or entertain, bias is likely. If the document tries to market a product or idea, this purpose can affect the content and validity of the information.	Yes	No
Are sources cited?	Yes	No
Content		
Is the document useful and relevant to your research?	Yes	No
Is it comprehensive? Sources too general or too complex are unhelpful.	Yes	No
Is the information accurate? If you are unsure, check it against other sources.	Yes	No
Is the information current and up-to-date?	Yes	No
Is the information balanced and inclusive of several viewpoints?	Yes	No
Is any use of graphics, video and/or audio truly helpful?	Yes	No
Is the site free of advertisements?	Yes	No
Is the document free of errors in spelling, grammar and/or mechanics?	Yes	No
Reliability and Structure		
Do other sites cite or link to the document?	Yes	No
Is the organization of the website logical and simple to navigate?	Yes	No
Is the site consistently available, and does it load smoothly and quickly?	Yes	No

Top Level Domain Names

Every web address (also called a URL) contains a top-level domain name which indicates what type of organization created the website or the country of origin for the organization or information. The top-level domain name can help you ascertain the validity of the site’s information. Place more faith in a domain ending in .edu or .gov than in one ending with .com. Country codes are always two-letter codes, such as .de (Germany) or .tr (Turkey). Organizational codes contain three or more letters.

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| .aero – airlines | .edu – educational institution | .museum – museums |
| .biz – business | .gov – U.S. government agency | .net – network |
| .com – commercial | .mil – U.S. military | .org – non-profit organization |
| .coop – business cooperatives | | |