6 CRITERIA FOR WEBSITES

These six criteria deal with the content of Web sites rather than the graphics or site design. Apply these criteria when you research on the internet.

**1.  AUTHORITY**

Authority reveals that the person, institution or agency responsible for a site has the qualifications and knowledge to do so. Evaluating a web site for authority:

* Authorship: It should be clear who developed the site.
* **Contact information** should be clearly provided: e-mail address, snail mail address, phone number, and fax number.
* Credentials: the author should state qualifications, credentials, or personal background that gives them authority to present information.
* Check to see if the site supported by an organization or a commercial body

**2.  PURPOSE**

The purpose of the information presented in the site should be clear. Some sites are meant to inform, persuade, state an opinion, entertain, or parody something or someone. Evaluating a web site for purpose:

* Does the content support the purpose of the site?
* Is the information geared to a specific audience (students, scholars, general reader)?
* Is the site organized and focused?
* Are the outside links appropriate for the site?
* Does the site evaluate the links?
* [Check the domain of the site](https://libraries.dal.ca/using_the_library/evaluating_web_resources/types_of_urls.html). The URL may indicate its purpose.

**3.  COVERAGE**

It is difficult to assess the extent of coverage since depth in a site, through the use of links, can be infinite. One author may claim comprehensive coverage of a topic while another may cover just one aspect of a topic. Evaluating a web site for coverage:

* Does the site claim to be selective or comprehensive?
* Are the topics explored in depth?
* Compare the value of the site’s information compared to other similar sites.
* Do the links go to outside sites rather than its own?
* Does the site provide information with no relevant outside links?

**4.  CURRENCY**

Currency of the site refers to: 1) how current the information presented is, and 2) how often the site is updated or maintained. It is important to know when a site was created, when it was last updated, and if all of the links are current. Evaluating a web site for currency involves finding the date information was:

* first written
* placed on the web
* last revised

Then ask if:

* Links are up-to-date
* Links provided should be reliable. Dead links or references to sites that have moved are not useful.
* Information provided so trend related that its usefulness is limited to a certain time period?
* the site been under construction for some time?

**5.  OBJECTIVITY**

Objectivity of the site should be clear. Beware of sites that contain bias or do not admit its bias freely. Objective sites present information with a minimum of bias. Evaluating a web site for objectivity:

* Is the information presented with a particular bias?
* Does the information try to sway the audience?
* Does site advertising conflict with the content?
* Is the site trying to explain, inform, persuade, or sell something?

**6.  ACCURACY**

There are few standards to verify the accuracy of information on the web. It is the responsibility of the reader to assess the information presented. Evaluating a web site for accuracy:

* Reliability: Is the author affiliated with a known, respectable institution?
* References: do statistics and other factual information receive proper references as to their origin?
* Does the reading you have already done on the subject make the information seem accurate?
* Is the information comparable to other sites on the same topic?
* Does the text follow basic rules of grammar, spelling and composition?
* Is a bibliography or reference list included?

Source: https://libraries.dal.ca/using\_the\_library/evaluating\_web\_resources/6\_criteria\_for\_websites.html