

5 Criteria for Evaluating a Website

- Authority
- Accuracy
- Currency
- Objectivity
- Coverage

These questions will help you decide if a Web site is appropriate for using in your research.

Authority

- ☑ What organization or individual sponsors/produces/hosts the site?
- ☑ Is the **sponsor of the page reputable**? How reputable?
- ☑ Is the page **signed by an author**?
- ☑ Is the **author an expert**?
- ☑ What makes you think so? (e.g., are the **author's credentials listed**?)
- ☑ Can you **contact the author**? If not, can you contact the sponsor/producer/publisher of the site?
- ☑ Is there a link to information about the author or the sponsor?
- ☑ Can you **cross-reference the author** to verify the **author's credibility**?
- ☑ Using a "**link test**" through Google's advanced search, what **sites link to the page** you are thinking about using? Are those pages credible?
 - In Google Advanced Search look down on the page to "Page Specific Search" to discover how many **other pages link to the site, and determine the relative quality of those pages.**
 - **Note: DO NOT COUNT PAGES/LINKS THAT COME FROM THE SAME WEB SITE THAT YOU ARE EVALUATING.**

Here's the page from Google Advanced Search --

see who links into a page by typing the address of the target page here:

Page-Specific Search

Similar	Find pages similar to the page	<input type="text" value="e.g. www.google.com/help.html"/>	Search
Links	Find pages that link to the page	<input type="text"/>	Search

Accuracy

- ☑ What subject/topic does the page discuss, and **does the information seem reasonable** from your basic knowledge of the subject (if any).
- ☑ Are any of the **comments footnoted or otherwise substantiated**?
- ☑ Is the **page well-written** and free of any typographical and grammatical errors?
- ☑ How does the **information compare with other research**? Can you verify the information in another source? If it totally disagrees with everything else you have discovered, it may be a bogus, biased or hoax site.

more information on the reverse of this page

Currency

- ☑ Does the page state **when it was created, copyrighted, or last revised**?
- ☑ Does the page contain links to other websites and, if so, **do the links work**?
- ☑ What is your impression of the sites to which the page links?

Objectivity

- Does the information show a **minimum of bias**?
- Is the page **designed to sway opinion**?
- Is there any **advertising** on the page?
- Try using **www.allwhois.com** or **www.truewhois.com** to see who owns the site and what other sites the owner is connected with.

Coverage

- Is the page you are using **“under construction”**?
- Is the **coverage superficial**? If so, **do the links on the page add anything relevant** to the original page?
- Does the **information on the page apply to your research question**? If the information is found to be accurate, it still may not apply to your thesis statement for your research project and you may have located the page because of the key words you used in your search strategy.
- Is the **page’s content on the correct intellectual level** for the project you are working on?
- Are you being **swayed by the page’s design and presentation** rather than by the scope and depth of the information that is presented?

Here is a grid that will help you think about Web site content

Criteria	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Excellent
Authority			
Accuracy			
Currency			
Objectivity			
Coverage			