

Evaluating Websites

Because **anyone** can publish on the Web, it is important to be able to distinguish between reliable and unreliable web sites. Consider **all** of the following criteria when evaluating a web site.

Criteria	Factors
Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Who wrote it?<input type="checkbox"/> What are their qualifications?<input type="checkbox"/> Are they experts?<input type="checkbox"/> Is this content peer reviewed?<input type="checkbox"/> Who published/hosted it?<input type="checkbox"/> Is the publisher/host reputable?<input type="checkbox"/> Does the site have a peer review process?
Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Why was this site created?<input type="checkbox"/> Is this fact or opinion?<input type="checkbox"/> Is it biased?
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Is this true?<input type="checkbox"/> Can you tell where they got their information?<input type="checkbox"/> Can you find this information elsewhere?
Currency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> When was this information published or last updated?<input type="checkbox"/> Is it current enough for your research?

TIPS:

- The **author and publisher/host** may be the **same**. For example, if you don't see an author's name on an organization's website, then the organization is both the author and the publisher.
- You may not find all of your answers on the web page provided. You may have to **look at other pages** on the web site (look for an "about" link, for example) or search the web for more information about the person or organization that created the web site.
- Many sites with peer-reviewed content will state this **on other pages** of the web site. You may find information through the "about" link, or try **searching the site** for "review process," "submission" or related terms. Keep in mind that if a site does have peer reviewed items, it doesn't necessarily mean every page on the site is peer-reviewed.
- **Weigh all four criteria** when making your decision. For example, the information may appear accurate, but if the authority is suspect you may want to find a more authoritative site for your information.

EXERCISE

You are researching climate change for this course and find the following web sites. For each web site, write 1-2 paragraphs answering the question: "Is this web site a reliable source or information?" Explain why or why not. Be sure to address each of the above criteria in your explanation.

List of Web Sites for TAs:

Note: Split discussion sections into groups of 5 and assign two different sites to each group so no two groups in the section have the same 2 sites.

USGS Global Change Science

http://www.usgs.gov/global_change/

Science and Environmental Policy Project

<http://www.sepp.org/key%20issues/keyissue.html>

Cooler Heads Coalition

<http://www.globalwarming.org/node/34>

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - National Climatic Data Center

<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/paleo/globalwarming/index.html>

American Meteorological Society

<http://www.ametsoc.org/policy/2007climatechange.html>

US Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/index.html>

Environmental Defense Fund

<http://www.edf.org/page.cfm?tagID=65>

World Resources Institute

<http://www.wri.org/>

American Institute of Physics

<http://www.aip.org/history/climate/impacts.htm>

Natural Resources Stewardship Project

<http://nrsp.com/default.html>

World View of Global Warming

<http://www.worldviewofglobalwarming.org/index.html>