HOW TO TELL IF A WEBSITE IS RELIABLE

The information you find online isn’t always accurate or reliable. Before you decide to include information from a website in your assessment it’s a good idea to evaluate its currency, authority, purpose, objectivity and writing style.

Currency

A reliable website will usually tell you when it was published or last updated. To find this information check the bottom of the page. You can then decide if the information on the website is current enough to use in your assessment.

Some teachers will recommend that you only use information published in the last five years.

Authority

Only use websites that clearly identify the author or organisation that created the information.

Look for websites published by reliable, well known organisations such as government departments, educational institutions or professional bodies.

The URL will usually tell you what type of site you’re looking at:

.gov = government department
.edu = educational institution
.org = non-profit organisation
.com = commercial website

This website shows when it was last updated at the bottom of the page.
Read the **About Us** or **About this Site** section, or look at the author’s bio for more information. Try to work out if the authors of the site have the experience or qualifications to write about the topic.

If you’re unsure you can Google the authors’ names to learn more about them.

**Purpose**

Try to work out the purpose of the website. Who is for? Is the website trying to sell something? Or is it trying to educate and inform?

Check the **About Us** or **About this Site** section for information about the site, and use your judgment.

A site that’s trying to sell you something, with lots of ads on the page, is usually not the best place to find reliable information for your assessments.
**Objectivity**

Consider the website’s objectivity. Does it promote a particular point of view? Is it arguing for or against something?

Does it back up its information with fact and figures, and if it does, where do those facts come from?

A reliable website will often have a reference list, or links to other websites showing exactly where they got their information from.

If you’re unsure about the facts presented on a particular site check the information against another source, such as a textbook.

Avoid blogs and personal websites. They may not be objective.

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**Writing Style**

Check the writing style. Look out for grammar and spelling mistakes, as these are usually a sign that the site isn’t professionally managed.

If you need help finding reliable websites contact your college library.
Use this handy checklist to evaluate websites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the website:</th>
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**Currency**
When was the website published, or last updated?

**Authority**
Who wrote this information?
Does the author have the experience or qualifications to write about this topic?
Is the website published by a reliable source (e.g. a government department, well known organisation, education institution etc.)?

**Purpose**
What is the purpose of this website (e.g. to educate, inform, sell something etc.)?

**Objectivity**
Does the website push one point of view?
Does the author tell you where they got their information from (i.e. include a reference list)?

**Writing Style**
Are there any spelling errors?
Are there any grammatical errors?

Is this a good website for an assessment?