

## Evaluating a Web Site- The Five W's

\* WHO: Look at the author of your website. Is it by a famous, well-respected organization like UC Berkeley, or the US Government? Web sites that have good authors don't try to hide this fact. Is the author Joe Blow from Anytown, USA? Is no author even listed? Beware of websites that don't let you know who has written them or what their qualifications are! Look at the URL (address) to get more information about the authors of your web site. Web sites from universities end with .edu. US Government sites end with .gov. Personal web sites or company web sites usually end in .com. Organizations (like the Sierra Club, or the San Francisco Public Library) usually end in .org.

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WHEN: Look at the date of your website. When was the web site created? Does the web site say when it was last updated? Is the information old or new? How much does that matter for your research project? Are the links to other sites still working? If they're not, you can guess that the author is not working on this web page anymore and the rest of the information might be out of date, too.

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WHAT: What is the goal of the website? What is the viewpoint? Is it to give people facts, or is it trying to sell something? Is the website made to inform? Is it made to persuade? Or is it made to make you laugh? Sometimes web authors make sites with completely incorrect information as a joke! Many websites are trying to sell you a trip to the Bahamas, or some new medicine. Is the web site you're looking at made to help people do research or talk them into buying something?

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WHERE: Where does the information come from? Most authors of good websites will tell you where they got their information. Did they do their own research? Did they read books, magazines or newspapers? Do they give you a bibliography (list) of the sources they used? Is the website written by an organization that is famous for their research (like a medical school or a science organization)? Beware of authors that don't tell you where they got their information.

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WHY: Why is this information useful to you? Does it answer your questions? Does it help you write your report? Or is the information not really related to your research? The best information in the world is not useful if it doesn't answer the questions that YOU have. Maybe you need to look for another site that discusses what you are looking for.

Finally, remember that ALL the information you may need is not on the Web. Ask your librarian to help you find the best information that will work for your research.

*This information was used with permission from the San Francisco Public Library and was inspired by the work of Kathy Schrock. For more information about web site evaluation, see her website at: <http://discoveryschool.com/schrockguide/eval.html>.*