

Evaluating Online Resources

It is important to note that anyone can publish on the internet. Information published on the internet does not necessarily have to be reviewed, edited, or proofread. How can you, the researcher, tell the difference between a website you can trust and one that you should not? Here are some helpful tips to guide your research.



AUTHORITY

- In order to determine the reliability of a website, it is helpful to know who the author is. If there is no author, look for the name of the organization or agency that sponsors the website. In either case, you need to verify the credentials of the author or organization.
- In many cases, you can learn about the source of a website simply by looking at the URL. If you perform a search on a topic using a search engine, such as Google or Yahoo, you may be able to tell if the site will be useful just by looking at its address. Usually, the last three letters of the website address indicate the domain. For academic assignments use mostly .edu, .gov and .org
- Typically, an individual user may have an address such as <http://www.xyz.com/~smith/index.html>. The ~smith is a clue that an individual named smith probably posted that information in his/her personal directory. Some indicators that a website is a personal page are a tilde (~), percent sign (%), the words “users,” “members,” or “people.”

OBJECTIVITY

- It is important to consider whether or not a website has quality, objective information.
- When evaluating internet sources, ask yourself these questions in order to determine the objectivity of the website:
 1. Why is this information online? Is the purpose to inform or influence the audience of the website?
 2. What is the author’s point of view? Is there a clear bias or agenda?
 4. What is the tone of the page? Is it Humorous? Exaggerated?

CURRENCY

- The internet provides a research advantage because it can be updated frequently. Most websites indicate when their websites were created and when they were last updated.

☺ Baltimore County’s Fee-Based Databases have been evaluated for you! To access them, go to www.bcps.org/offices/lis. Select “Fee-Based” link. Passwords are available on the Research Guide on the Dulaney High School website.