



Photo Credit: Rock1997

Evaluating Websites for Quality

When doing academic research, not all websites are created equally. For academic projects, you need to evaluate any websites you use for academic quality. This is not the same thing as evaluating a website for accuracy. For example, while a Wikipedia entry might be accurate, encyclopedias—and dictionaries and quick answer sites such as Ask.com—are not considered to be academic sources. Therefore, you would not cite Wikipedia and other encyclopedias, dictionaries, and quick answer sites as a source for your academic project.

While there are not absolute rules about what is or is not a quality academic source, the more of the following criteria to which you can answer “Yes,” the more likely that you have found a quality website. If you cannot determine the answer to the question, you should check the “No” category.

Criteria	Yes	No
Is the author listed?		
Does the website include biographical information about the author’s credentials, reputation or affiliation? If not, can you find this information elsewhere?		
Does the author appear qualified to write on the topic?		
Is the website written using an objective tone?		
Can you determine the publisher of the website?		
Does the website include information about the publisher’s credentials, reputation, or intention? If not, can you find this information elsewhere?		
Is the publisher known for being objective?		
Does the website appear to be professional?		
Is the date when the website was published or last updated listed?		
Is the date current?		
Is the information on the website thorough?		
Are references included on the webpage/website?		
Can you verify the information on the website?		
Does the material on the website appear to be consistent with other research materials you have found?		

For more detailed information on evaluating sources, please consult “Evaluating Research” which is published as part of the Resources for Researchers website: <http://writing.stevenberg.info/tutorials/validity>.



Last updated: 12 January 2014

Handout published by Dr. Steven L. Berg, Associate Professor of English and History at Schoolcraft College. <http://www.stevenberg.info>. E-mail: sberg@schoolcraft.edu. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/deed.en_US.