



Evaluating Websites

Authority:

- Who wrote or produced the website? Are they experts in this subject?
- What kind of education or experience do they have?
- Is the website one of a well known individual, reputable institution, organization or company?

*Example: Wikipedia is edited by anonymous **non-experts**. Not good research*

Objectivity:

- Does the author state the goals for this website?
- Does the website appear geared toward one side of an issue or in favor of a particular person, product, or idea?
- Are other products, people, or ideas written about in a negative or positive way?

Example: an article on the health benefits of fast food written by a fast food company is biased, not objective. This is not good research.

Quality:

- Is the information current?
- Is your topic one that requires current information?
- Has the author used good grammar?
- Are there spelling or typographical errors?
- Are the graphics (images, tables, charts, diagrams) appropriate and clearly presented?
- Is the information complete and accurate?

While it is not the only thing to look for, a well designed website shows someone put some effort into making the site easy to use and current.

Relevance:

- Is the website appropriate for your research topic?
- Does the information address your research question or meet the requirements of your assignment?

Example: If you are writing about lethal injection as a form of execution you don't want information on the electric chair.



Sample websites – Authentic or bogus?

California Velcro - <http://home.inreach.com/kumbach/velcro.html>

tree octopus - <http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>

male pregnancy - www.malepregnancy.com

dihydrogen monoxide - www.dhmo.org

<http://whs.d214.org/results/whslibspecial/researchhelps/fakewebsites.htm>

Citing Websites

Article from an online periodical

Graven, Matthew P. and Laura Delaney. "Keep Your Kids Safe." PC Magazine 3 Aug. 2004 <<http://www.pcmagazine.com/article2/0,1759,1619373,00.asp>>.

Document from a professional internet site:

"The USA Patriot Act in the Library." American Library Association. 16 July 2004. <<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/ifissues/usapatriactlibrary.htm>>.

Entire website:

Death Penalty Information Center. 2004. 12 July 2004 <<http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/>>.