

EVALUATING SOURCES/WEBSITES FOR CREDIBILITY

1. Ask yourself: Could I hold this author/organization accountable for this content?

2. How does the URL end?

.edu .gov Usually reliable. These are education or government sites.	.org Often ok, watch for bias. Tend to be advocacy sites/ non-profit organizations.	.com Be careful! These are commercial (for profit) sites, <i>anyone</i> can get one.
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3. Look for an author & identifying information.

Ideally you want a full author name and their credentials. If you can't find an author name, look for information about the organization running the site.

4. Look for references.

Does it back up its claims with data? Can you trace their arguments back to the source? This is especially important when looking at pieces claiming to be fact, not opinion.

5. Look for bias.

Some bias is inevitable. Ask yourself who is funding this? Is there a clear bias toward one side of the argument? Does it seem like they're cherry-picking data?

6. When was it written?

Timeliness is important. A 1996 site on climate change probably isn't reliable today.

<p>Scholarly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable, scholarly • Peer-Reviewed • Written by experts for scholars • Found in academic journals • Found in databases • Lots of citations & data <p>EX: The American Journal of Nursing</p>	<p>Substantive News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be reliable, NOT scholarly • Researched & vetted • Sometimes have citations • General information • Broad, intelligent audience <p>EX: New York Times, The Economist</p>	<p>Popular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasionally reliable, NOT scholarly • Mainly for entertainment • Meant to sell something • Rarely have citations • Broad audience, non-scholarly content <p>EX: People, Sports Illustrated</p>	<p>Sensational/Quackery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unreliable, DEFINITELY NOT scholarly • Sensational & inflammatory language • Superstitions & conspiracy theories <p>EX: The National Enquirer, The Star</p>
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Is it a scholarly article or isn't it?

<http://www.alverno.edu/media/alvernocollege/library/pdfs/scholarly.pdf>

1. Be sure you are looking in an *electronic database* and not on the Internet

<p>Electronic Databases (a.k.a. journal databases) Contain articles that are edited and compiled from well-known journal sources</p>	v.	<p>The Internet (a.k.a. the Web) Has no editorial board to go through the contents of web pages for currency & accuracy</p>
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2. Once you have selected an electronic database that is appropriate to your topic, then *look for the right clues*:

Scholarly Resources

- ◆ are published by an association or scholarly press; almost never appear in newspapers or popular magazines
- ◆ always identify the author(s) and typically list the educational institution the author is affiliated with as well as his/her credentials
- ◆ always have references and a bibliography
- ◆ are typically written by professors, scientists or professionals; often the article is based on or relates to a study
- ◆ usually have long titles that describe the article's content
- ◆ are primarily found in subject-specific periodical indexes such as PsycINFO
- ◆ typically include an abstract summarizing the article's content
- ◆ are usually quite lengthy
- ◆ may contain supporting diagrams, charts or illustrations

Popular Press Resources

- ◆ are published in newspapers and magazines for example, Harpers or Ms.
- ◆ sometimes identify the author(s) as well as the author(s) affiliation and credentials
- ◆ rarely have references and a bibliography
- ◆ are typically written by freelance writers or professional journalists; do not relate to a study
- ◆ usually have fairly short titles that are not descriptive of the article's content
- ◆ are found in more generalized indexes such as Academic Search Elite (EBSCO)
- ◆ rarely include an abstract summarizing the article's contents
- ◆ can be any length, even shorter than a page
- ◆ often contain photographs and advertisements