

WEBSITE RELIABILITY CHECKLIST

Use this 5-point checklist to evaluate websites for reliability. It will help you decide whether a particular site is worthy of inclusion in a college-level research paper.

1) **VALIDITY**

- a) Who is the author(s) of the site? Look for their credentials.
- b) Is contact information provided? The author should be accountable for her/his work.
- c) Is there a link provided to their homepage? Look for a reliable institution.
- d) What is the first part (major domain) of the web address (URL)? This indicates the site's origin:
 - .com = commercial
 - .edu = education
 - .org = non-profit organization
 - .gov = government
 - .mil = military
 - .cu = Cuba (.it = Italy, etc.)
 - ~ usually means an individual maintains the site (as opposed to an institution).

2) **CURRENCY**

- a) When was the site last updated? A reliable site is frequently revised and improved.
- b) When was the site first created? A site's longevity is a clue to its stability.

3) **CONTENT**

- a) What is the depth and breadth of the information offered? Be wary of too much or too little.
- b) Are there links to other useful and reliable sites? They should be relevant to the subject matter.
- c) Is the site relevant to your needs? It is important to maintain your focus.
- d) How is the site structured? If there are functions such as an in-site index or table of contents they should assist with navigating the information.
- e) Does the advertising overpower the content? It shouldn't.

4) **PURPOSE**

- a) Is this site trying to persuade you? Educate you? Market a product? For instance, a .com site may try sell you something whereas an .edu site most often exists for the sake of education.
- b) Are there any biases that might be promoted: racial, gender, religious, or other types? Even non-profit .org sites may be biased.

5) **ACCURACY**

- a) How can you ensure the information is precise, authoritative, and current? The author should cite the sources used. Look for

