

Evaluating Web Sites Checklist

For most of your assignments you will need to find sites that contain good quality information. As a general rule you should avoid sites that are biased and one sided, are trying to sell you something, or have been created only for entertainment purposes.

The **5 W's: Who? Where? What? Why? When?** will help you to decide if the information on a site is worth using.

Answer as many questions as possible. Circle either **Yes**, **No** or **Don't know**. When you have completed the sheet, count the number of circles in each column. If you have said "Yes" more than "No" and "Don't know", the more likely it is that the web site contains good quality information.

Title of web site:.....

URL:.....

Date evaluated:.....

Who?	Who has created the web site? (Hint: look for this information in an 'About us' section of the site)			
	Can you identify the person or organisation behind the web site?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Have you heard of them before and do you know that they are to be trusted?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Have the authors of the site provided any information about their background, qualifications or credentials that demonstrates their knowledge of the subject?	Yes	No	Don't know
Where?	Where is the information from? (Hint: look at the URL of the web site for clues)			
	Look at where the site is based: is this appropriate for your needs? For example: if you are looking for information that relates to the UK, the content of a foreign site may not be relevant.	Yes	No	Don't know
	Look at the URL to determine the business of the site owners: can they be trusted to provide good quality information? (.gov = government sites; .ac.uk & .edu = educational sites; .org = an organization; .co.uk & .com = commercial sites.)	Yes	No	Don't know
	Can you contact the owners of the site in the real world by telephone or mail? (Not only by e-mail or an online contact form.)	Yes	No	Don't know

Checklist continues over the page.

What?	What does the site say? (Hint: look at document titles, content and links)			
	Does the site contain enough information for your needs?	Yes	No	Don't know
	If the site contains a lot of opinion, is it unbiased and include multiple viewpoints?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Does it contain mostly facts?	Yes	No	Don't know
	If it includes facts, can you verify that they are correct? For example: by checking other sources of information.	Yes	No	Don't know
	Does the site provide references to the sources of its information?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Do the authors provide evidence to back up what is being said?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Do the contents match what you already know about the subject?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Does the site provide links to other sites or documents on relevant topics?	Yes	No	Don't know
Why?	Why is the site on the web? (Hint: look for a statement of the site's purpose or mission, at its links, content and advertising)			
	Does the name of the site indicate its purpose?	Yes	No	Don't know
	If the purpose of the site is to sell a product, is this obvious?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Does the site avoid trying to persuade you to agree with it?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Is the site aiming to be educational and informative by providing factual information?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Does the site avoid advertising?	Yes	No	Don't know
When?	When was the site created? (Hint: Look for dates on the pages)			
	Is the date that the site was created appropriate for your assignment? For example, if you need information on a recent event you need to find a site with up to date content.	Yes	No	Don't know
	Has the site been updated recently?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Does the date of the site affect the relevance of the content?	Yes	No	Don't know
	Is the site being maintained? For example, do links work?	Yes	No	Don't know
Total number of answers in each column				

Remember: This checklist is a guide only. You must use your common sense to decide whether or not a site is relevant to your assignment. A site that has a poor score may still be a useful source of information but, if in doubt, check the facts against other sources before including them in your work.