

EVALUATING INTERNET SOURCES

Not everything you see online is true. That's why it's so important to screen websites before you use them to help with homework or for information in a school report.

Use this checklist to figure out if the online source you're using is reliable.

Evaluate the WEBSITE

- What is the domain?** Look at the Web address for clues about what kind of site you're using.
 - .edu:** a school, college, or university
 - .gov:** a government agency
 - .com:** a commercial business
 - .net:** a network
 - .org:** an advocacy group

- Is it easy to navigate?** A reliable website will make it easy to find what you need.
- Are there a lot of errors?** Spelling and grammar mistakes probably mean it's not trustworthy.

Evaluate the AUTHOR

- Is there an author listed?** The author should be easy to identify and contact.
- Is he/she an expert?** The author should be qualified to write on this subject.
- Has he/she published other works?** An author who has published other works has published other works.

Evaluate the INFORMATION

- Is it current and accurate?** The information should be up to date and include references.
- Can you find it on other sites?** Make sure the information appears in other reliable sources, including websites, books, and articles.
- Is it fact or opinion?** Be sure to note when you're using someone's opinion and when you're using proven facts.

Hint

Trust your gut! If something doesn't seem right, it probably isn't.

NetSmartz.org/TipSheets

