

How to Tell if You Are Looking at a Great Web Site

Evaluating information found on the Internet is very important. Many new websites are created on an hourly basis and not all of them provide information that is accurate. Here are some tips to help you judge a website's content for accuracy and reliability.

The Web is a lot like a flea market: there's a vast selection of sites to choose from but not a lot of order to it. Some sites are offered by reputable "dealers" and some from individuals who want to show off their personal favorite items. Sometimes it's hard to tell what is a hidden treasure - what's worth taking a look at, and what's a waste of time.

In general, it's not hard to find sites if you use a search engine like [Google](#), or a subject directory like [Yahoo](#). But how can you tell if a site you find is worthwhile?

Tip 1: Sometimes what is in a website's address can indicate the nature of the site. Sites from commercial businesses usually include ".com"; federal government sites end in ".gov," K-12 school sites often include "k12" in the address, and college and university sites often include ".edu." Sites from non-profit organizations often include ".org." A site with a tilde (~) in the address usually indicates that this page is maintained or created by an individual, rather than representing an organization, a business, or a school.

Tip 2: Authorship/Sponsorship: Who Put up the Site? The name of the individual or group creating the site should be clearly stated. The creator should give a source for information in the site where necessary.

Tip 3: Purpose: Every Site Has a Reason for Being There. A site's purpose should be clear and its content should reflect its purpose, be it to entertain, persuade, educate, or sell. Advertising should be limited and appropriate. Figure out the site's purpose. Sites that are selling you something or asking you to sign up for something may not be present you with neutral, unbiased information.

Tip 4: A user should not need to pay a fee or type in personal information (such as his/her name or e-mail address) before using the site.

Tip 5: Check the publishing date. Obviously, Internet pages that have been published more recently are more credible.

Tip 6: Check out the contact information and resources. Credible websites should list contact information and resources.

Note:

- Every site does not need to meet every one of these criteria to be a great site, but the more of them a site does meet, the more likely it is to be a worthwhile place to spend time.