

TEST BEFORE YOU TRUST

Read through these questions. Although not all of these questions will apply to many websites, they are very useful guidelines to think about when you are wondering if a website is valid or worthy of using for research.

Sometimes if something seems a little “off” on a website you are visiting, it may be useful to just double-check some of the facts with another site that you know and trust.

Trustworthiness of the Author

1. Can you tell if the site is fact or opinion? (If the information seems one-sided, or biased, you will have to go elsewhere to hear the other side of the issue.)
2. Is the site free of advertising?
3. If there are ads, is it easy to tell the difference between ads and content?
4. Is the site sponsored by any organizations?
5. Is it clear who the site is for? (for example, college students or young children)
6. Is the tone calm and fair? (Sites that are mean and angry may not be good sources of information.)
7. Is the site open to everyone? (no age requirements, fees, passwords, or registration)
8. Is the site’s domain .edu, .net, .org, or .gov? (If you see a ~ in the URL, it may be a personal site, not an official site.)
9. Is the author identified by name?
10. Is the place the author works or the organization he/she belongs to given?
11. Is the author’s biography provided, and does he/she have credentials related to the subject of the site?
12. Has the author or site received any respected awards?
13. Was this site recommended by a site you trust? (for example, by a homework help site).
14. Are sources given for statistics?
15. Can the author be contacted if you have questions? (by email, street address, or phone number)
16. Is the site free of spelling, typo- graphical, and grammatical errors?

Usefulness of Information

17. Does the site have enough information for your research?
18. Is most of the information on the site useful for your research? (If not, it may be hard to find what you need.)

Up-to-Date-Information

19. Can you find the date the article, page, or site was created?
20. Can you find the date it was last revised?
21. Do all the links lead to active pages? (no dead links)

Ease of Use

22. Can you understand the text?
23. Is the type easy to see?
24. Do the titles and headings give a clear idea of the content?
25. Are there photos, maps, charts, or other illustrations that help you understand the information?
26. Is there a site map?
27. Is there a tool for searching the site?
28. Is there a “what’s new” feature?
29. Are links labeled clearly?
30. Do pages load quickly?