How Can I Tell if a Website is Reliable?

The Internet contains tons of high-quality, valued information sources – and it also contains some unreliable, invalid, and biased sources of misinformation. Typically this is not the fault of a moderator, but of the author for not doing accurate research. That is the nature of the internet, anyone who can write and has an opinion is an author on the internet. A prime example of this type of unreliable resources is Wikipedia. Wikipedia, for the most part, isn’t moderated or edited, therefore most of the information is false and unreliable. This can also be present in some reputable sources, such as biased new sites. With all this misinformation out there, how are you to decipher which information is good, and which information you can throw away? Here are some tips to use in your searches.

1. **Who authored (wrote) the site?** How can you find out?

2. **What type of information should you know before you can validate the author?**

3. **Who published the site?** How can you find out?

4. **What is the main purpose of the site?** Why did the author write the article and the publisher post it?

5. **Who is the intended audience?**

**HINT:** Don’t ignore the suffix on the domain name (the three-letter part that comes after the “.”). The suffix is usually descriptive of what type of entity hosts the website.

.edu = educational .com = commercial .mil = military .gov = government .org = nonprofit .net = networking
6. What is the quality of information provided on the website?

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7. When was the website first published? Is it regularly updated? How can you find out?

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8. Does the author cite sources? How many? Are the sources valid and justified in their quality of information?

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8. What type of sites link to the website you’re evaluating? How can you find out?

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**HINT**: Using either Bing or Google, in the search box, type “link:[name of your website]” with no space after the colon. For example, an article on net neutrality would look like:

link: https://www.aclu.org/net-neutrality

The resulting search will contain websites that link to your site.