

Evaluating Web sources

TIP: If the sponsorship and the authorship of a site are both unclear, think twice about using the site for your research.

AUTHORSHIP

- Is there an author? You may need to do some clicking and scrolling to find the author's name. If you are on an internal page of a site, for example, you may need to go to the home page or click an "about this site" link to learn the name of the author.
- If there is an author, can you tell whether he or she is knowledgeable and credible? When the author's qualifications aren't listed on the site itself, look for links to the author's home page, which may provide evidence of his or her interests and expertise.

SPONSORSHIP

- Who, if anyone, sponsors the site? The sponsor of a site is often named and described on the home page.
- What does the URL ending tell you? The URL often specifies the type of group hosting the site: commercial (.com), educational (.edu), nonprofit (.org), governmental (.gov), military (.mil), or network (.net). URLs may also indicate a country of origin: uk (United Kingdom) or jp (Japan), for instance.

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

- Why was the site created: To argue a position? To sell a product? To inform readers?
- Who is the site's intended audience? If you do not fit the audience profile, is information on the site still relevant to your topic?

CURRENCY

- How current is the site? Check for the date of publication or the latest update.
- How current are the site's links? If many of the links no longer work, the site may be too dated for your purposes.