

# Evaluating websites

These ABCs can help you decide if a website is reliable.

## A

### Accuracy

Is the information reliable and high in quality?

- ✓ Does the author cite specific sources? Are the sources credible?
- ✓ Can the information be verified in another source?
- ✓ Are there editors or reviewers?
- ✓ Are there grammar or spelling errors on the page?

### Authority

Who is responsible for the information and the website?

- ✓ Are the author's name and credentials included on the website?
- ✓ Is the author affiliated with a reputable organization, like a university?
- ✓ Is the information found on a personal webpage? If so, be careful.
- ✓ What does the domain name (e.g. .edu, .ca) tell you about the source?

## B

### Bias

Is the information presented more or less objectively?

- ✓ Is the information opinion or fact?
- ✓ Does the author promote one political or religious stance on an issue?
- ✓ What is the purpose of the page? Is it meant to entertain, inform, or sell?
- ✓ If there are ads, are they clearly distinguished from the content?

### Coverage

Is the topic adequately covered? Is the information what you need?

- ✓ What information is included? What is excluded?
- ✓ Is there in-depth or superficial coverage of the topic?
- ✓ Is there a better source (available in print or through the library's databases) that provides more complete coverage?

## C

### Currency

Is the information up to date?

- ✓ How old is the information?
- ✓ When was the page last updated or revised?
- ✓ Does your information need to be up to date? For many topics, currency of information is usually very important?



Make sure the website meets **all** of the above criteria.



Consider your purpose:  
How will you use the information?



Be vigilant in choosing websites with reliable information.

Visit <https://smu.ca/academics/evaluating-internet-resources.html> for more information.