



# Evaluating Web Sites

## The 5 W's (and 1 "H") of Cyberspace



Adapted from information by the Media Awareness Network at [www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca)

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How can you tell if you're looking at a great web site? How can you be sure that the information you find on line is credible? Sometimes it's hard to tell if you're looking at "treasure" or "trash." Ask yourself "**The Five W's (and 1 'H') of Cyberspace**" as you evaluate a web site. They're easy to remember—Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?

### **Who** is the source of information?

Has someone taken responsibility for the content of this Web site?  
Is information about the author or organization clearly stated?  
Can you contact the author or company by email, phone, or mail?

### **What** are you getting?

Is the information biased in any way? Does the site offer more than one viewpoint?  
Does the information seem complete?  
Is the information well written and easy to understand?  
Does the web site offer a list of links to resources for further information?  
Is the information based on research, or is it the author's opinion?

### **When** was the site created?

Is the reference date provided to show when the material was put online or when it was last updated?  
Is it important that the information you are seeking be right up to date?

### **Where** are you?

What is the domain name of the site you are visiting? .edu? .gov? .com? .org? .net?  
Are you on a personal web site? Is there a tilde ~ in the URL?  
Do you have to pay a fee or type in personal information (such as your name or email address) before you can use the site?  
Is there a lot of advertising on the site?

### **Why** are you here?

Can you get the information faster off-line? (in a book, magazine, atlas, or newspaper?)  
Does the material you're finding suit your needs?  
Can you verify the information (prove that it's accurate or true)?

### **How** can you tell what's what?

Did you double-check your facts and sources and then check them some more?  
Did you do a quick background check of the author? (Just type the author's name in a search engine and see what you find.)  
Did you see what other sites link to this site? (Go to Altavista.com, type link: followed by the URL of your site into the search box.)