Evaluating a Website

0:01 **Owl:** Welcome to Evaluating a Website, an instructional video on reading comprehension brought to you by the Excelsior College Online Writing Lab.

0:16 There’s lots of information available on the internet.

0:20 But how do you know which information is reliable?

0:23 Not all websites are the same.

0:25 Some are more trustworthy than others.

0:29 Before you decide to trust the information you find on a website, you should evaluate it for accuracy and reliability first.

0:37 In this video, I’ll go over two ways to evaluate a website.

0:42 One way is to know what type of website you’ve found.

0:46 I’ll list the most common types of websites and describe what they do.

0:50 Another way to evaluate websites is by applying a set of ten questions to judge the accuracy and reliability of the site.

0:58 Let’s get started!

1:01 There are different types of websites.

1:03 I’ll go over eight of the most common types so that you have a better idea of what they do and which one is right for you.

1:10 I’ll give you a description and example for each one, plus the typical domain each one has.

1:17 The domain is indicated by the letters after the period at the end of the website address.

1:22 Ok, let’s go over the list!

1:26 The first type is government websites.

1:29 These websites are maintained by government agencies to provide information or services to the public.

1:36 Their typical domain is .gov.

1:40 An example is [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

1:47 The next type is education websites.

1:50 These websites represent public or private institutions that provide educational services, such as schools and universities.

1:58 Their typical domain is .edu.

2:01 An example is [www.excelsior.edu](http://www.excelsior.edu).

2:07 Another type of website is an organization website.

2:11 These websites represent groups with a specific mission, cause, or agenda.

2:16 They include advocacy groups, philanthropic organizations, and political parties.

2:22 Their typical domain is .org or .com.
Some websites are informational. These websites provide information, such as facts, statistics, data, research studies, and collections. These websites may include online encyclopedias, research databases, and archives. Typical domains can include .edu, .gov, .org, .com, and .info.

Other websites focus on providing news. They provide information about local, national, and/or international current events. Typical domains include .org, .com, or .info.

Many websites fall in the category of social media. These websites allow users to network, collaborate, or share information. Their typical domain is .com.

Then there are personal websites. These websites promote a specific person or their ideas. These include online resumes and blogs. Their typical domain is .com.

An example of a personal website is Bill Gates’ blog, which you can find at www.gatesnotes.com.

Finally, there are also many commercial websites. These websites promote goods and services, such as online retail outlets and company home pages. Typical domains include .com, .biz, and .info.

There are other types of websites, and many more sub-categories of websites. Visit this Wikipedia article for a more complete list of website types: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Website#Types_of_website

Knowing the type of website will give you a better idea of whether the information it offers is right for you.

However, you should also apply these ten questions to determine whether the information is trustworthy and reliable.

1. Is the website trying to sell or promote a particular product or service?

If yes, keep in mind that the information provided on the website may be skewed to help make the sale.

2. Is the website affiliated with an organization, group, or political party that has a particular point-of-view, ideology, or agenda?
5:20 If yes, be aware of what their point-of-view, ideology, or agenda is and how it may bias the information provided on the website.

5:30 3. Does the website provide the author’s name and credentials?

5:35 Anonymity can encourage authors to make unsubstantiated or inflammatory claims.

5:41 4. Does the website have an editor or editorial board?

5:46 If so, does it provide the editors’ names and credentials?

5:51 Information that is moderated by an editor or editorial board may be more reliable.

5:57 5. Does the website provide contact information for the author and/or editor?

6:03 The availability of contact information for the author and/or editor demonstrates greater responsibility for the information being shared.

6:12 6. Is the material on the website peer-reviewed?

6:16 Peer-review is the gold-standard for academic research because it helps to ensure that information is properly vetted by experts in the field for quality and accuracy.

6:27 7. Is the website maintained, affiliated with, or accredited by a reputable organization?

6:35 The reputation of an affiliated organization can provide clues about the value or accuracy of the information.

6:43 8. Does the material on the website contain biases, logical fallacies, misconceptions, assumptions, or unsubstantiated claims?

6:52 Evidence of these problems with argumentation are signs that the information may not be accurate.

6:58 Click here to learn more about how to evaluate an argument for problems such as unsupported claims, assumptions, and logical fallacies.

7:07 9. Does the material on the website offer citations to support claims?

7:13 Are the sources credible?

7:15 In general, websites that provide citations to support claims tend to be more reliable.

7:21 However, the sources of evidence also need to be evaluated for credibility by applying these ten questions.

7:29 10. Does the material on the website provide a list of works cited?

7:34 Providing a list of works cited is not only good form for information that includes research, it is also an invaluable resource for locating additional information on the subject.

7:46 Keeping these questions in mind as you locate and evaluate websites will help you to make the best decision about which information to trust.

7:57 Thanks for listening to this instructional video on Evaluating a Website!
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