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How do you know a website is what you need?

Hints and tips for deciding if a web site is suitable for your needs.

Key questions

- Who is the information provider?
- Are they a reliable source of this information?
- Why is the information provided?
- When was it last updated?

Accuracy

- Is the information reliable and error free?
- Is there an editor or someone who checks the information?
- Are the sources used referenced? Can you follow them back to the original?
- Why was the web page written? What was the purpose?
- Is the information used accurate? Can you check easily?

Authority

- Who is the author/producer/publisher?
- Are there current contact details for the author?
- Who is the author? Are they recognised in this field as an expert?
- Is the site sponsored? If so, by whom?
- Does the web address help? Is it .ac.uk or .edu, for example?

Coverage

- Does the content provide what the title indicates it should?
- What is offered here that cannot be found elsewhere?
- How in-depth is the material?
- Does the content link out to other relevant information? If so, is this cited?
- Who is the audience for this content?
- Which topics are covered? In how much detail?
- Does the content apply to a certain time frame?

Currency

- Is the page dated? When was it produced?
- When was it last updated?
- Are any links in the page still working?
- Is the information on the page outdated?

Objectivity

- Is there a bias in the content?
- Is the content provided from a particular political/ideological viewpoint?
- Are you being asked to change an opinion?
- Is there any advertising on the page which indicates sponsorship?
- Is the page itself an advert?
- Which opinions, if any, are expressed by the author?
- Why was the content written? For whom?

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