

Website Credibility Checklist

Authority: <i>Determine the author's expertise.</i> (Look at links such as "About Us," "FAQ", or "Biography," etc.)	Yes	No
Is it clear who the author of the website is?		
Has the author provided contact information?		
If there is no personal author, is a publisher or institution provided along with contact information?		
Does the individual or institution list their credentials? ¹		
Purpose: <i>Is the site for a scholarly audience or a non-professional one?</i>		
Does the URL have an .edu, .gov, or .org ending? ²		
Does the language seem too casual for an academic audience?		
Are there significant typos, misspellings, or grammatical errors?		
Objectivity: <i>What are the author's motives in creating the website?</i>		
Does the author have any conflict of interest in conveying accurate information on this topic? (E.g., is the research funded by a for-profit business?)		
If a debate is covered, are all sides fairly presented?		
Does the author seem otherwise biased?		
Currency: <i>Does the website seem up to date?</i> (Check the bottom or top of the homepage for dates. Try also looking at the page source: Press Control+U on a PC.)		
Is there a date given for when the site was created?		
Is there a date which shows when the site was last modified?		
Are there "broken" links?		
Accuracy: <i>Look for indicators that the information is reliable.</i>		
Based on your other reading, does the content of the website seem accurate?		
Are key facts supported with embedded links, or references in footnotes or a bibliography?		
If there are links to other websites, do <i>those</i> websites evaluate well according to this checklist?		

¹ Some highly reputable institutions do not list their credentials, but they don't need to. E.g., the CDC and the WHO. However, "universities" are not always trustworthy. Prager University and Liberty University are just two insidious examples.

² Warning: Many .org sites do not meet scholarly standards, e.g., www.sepp.org and www.globalwarming.org. They use phrases like "objective science," "exposing flawed economic, scientific, and risk analysis," "sound science" to make it seem like they are legitimate.