



Evaluating a Website

8 Most Common types of websites & what they do

Government

Websites maintained by government agencies to provide information or services to the public.

Typical domain(s): .gov

Example: www.whitehouse.gov

Education

Websites that represent public or private institutions that provide educational services, such as schools and universities.

Typical domain(s): .edu

Example: www.excelsior.edu

Organization

Websites that represent groups with a specific mission, cause, or agenda. These include advocacy groups, philanthropic organizations, and political parties.

Typical domain(s): .org or .com

Example: www.aclu.org

Information

Websites that offer information, such as facts, statistics, data, research studies, and collections. These may include online encyclopedias, research databases, and archives.

Typical domain(s): .edu, .gov, .org, .com, or .info

Example: www.gutenberg.org

News

Websites that provide information about local, national, and/or international current events.

Typical domain(s): .org, .com, or .info

Example: www.nytimes.com

Social Media

Websites that allow users to network, collaborate, or share information.

Typical domain(s): .com

Example: www.facebook.com

Personal

Websites that promote a specific person or their ideas. These include online resumes and blogs.

Typical domain(s): .com

Example: www.gatesnotes.com

Commercial

Websites that promote goods and services, such as online retail outlets and company home pages.

Typical domain(s): .com, .biz, or .info

Example: www.amazon.com

10 Questions to determine whether the information is Trustworthy & 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?

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.



3. Does the website provide the author's name and credentials?

Anonymity can encourage authors to make unsubstantiated or inflammatory claims.



4. Does the website have an editor or editorial board? If so, does it provide the editors' names and credentials?

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



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

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



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

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.



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

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



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

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



9. Does the material on the website offer citations to support claims? Are the sources credible?

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



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

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.

