

Consider the Source

A Student Guide

To Evaluating Internet Sources

From the "CARS Checklist" developed by Robert Harris
(NHD 1999 pub.) adapted by Carlita Kosty.

or other

C.A.R.S.

Check each Internet source you use for:

I. CREDIBILITY: Can I trust this source to have correct information?

1. Check for:

- Is the author or sponsor related to a reliable institution or government agency?
- Are the author's credentials given?
- Is the name of the sponsor organization given?

2. Danger clues:

- No author or sponsor given
- Disagrees with other information you have found
- All negative information
- Poor grammar, misspelled words

II. ACCURACY: Is this information factual, up to date, and complete?

1. Check for:

- Does it give the full story? Both sides?
- Does it show evidence of bias or prejudice?
(If yes, it may not be useless. Different viewpoints can help the researcher understand the topic and context better.)

2. Danger clues:

- No dates, or very old dates
- Unclear or sweeping generalizations
- Very one-sided view, no mention of the "other side"

III. REASONABLENESS: Is this information fair, objective, and logical?

1. Check for:

- Does the information seem likely, possible, or probable?
- Is it consistent? Or does it have contradictions?
- Does it try to be fair and balanced?

2. Danger clues:

- Outrageous or extreme language
- Exaggerations
- Advertising disguised as factual information

IV. SUPPORT: Does the site tell the source of facts and details used?

1. Check for:

- Is there a bibliography?
- Are quotes and statistics documented?
- Can you find at least two other sources that agree with the information?

2. Danger clues:

- No sources given for quotes, numbers, or other details
- No other sources give similar information

For Internet sites:

1. What is this site about?
Record its title for citation.
2. Who created this page?
Consider the author's credentials. Record the author's name for citation.
3. Where is the information coming from?
Consider the sponsoring institution for the page. Record the URL for citation.
of the site.
4. Why is this site on the web?
Consider how the site's purpose affects the information it offers.
5. When was the page or information created?
Record the created/updated date and your date of visit for citation.
6. How accurate or credible is the page?

