

# Internet Source Evaluation

## 7 Steps to Appropriate, Reliable Research

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### 1. Look for Authority.

Who is the author and what are his credentials?  
Has he published books or other materials on the subject?  
Is the page in a personal Internet account or part of an official Web site?

### 2. Check out the Dates.

When was the Web site posted or the article published?  
Is the information current and when was it last updated?  
Is the date important to the information?

### 3. Search for Documentation.

What online sources or print references did the author use?  
Is a bibliography included or working hypertext links?  
Is the source one-sided or does it acknowledge opposing views?

### 4. Determine the Purpose.

Why and for whom was the research compiled or the Web site designed?  
Is it linked to a federal (.gov) or non-profit (.org) agency, an organization (.net), an educational institution (.edu), a business (.com), or a person's name (.name)?

### 5. Figure out the Review Process.

Did you use a database to find the article in a journal?  
Can you locate peer reviews or critiques on the article?  
Is the Web site part of an official, scholarly, business or personal site?

### 6. Decide on the Suitability.

How relevant or appropriate is the material?  
Do you need to find additional sources?  
Is it better to use journal articles, books, or Web sites for your topic?

### 7. Test for Overall Accuracy and Credibility.

What spelling or grammar errors did you notice?  
Are there accurate footnotes or hypertext links that provide credibility?  
And most important, can you corroborate the facts in other sites or materials?

## More Information

**For more information on evaluating sources:**

<http://infolit.vccs.edu/connect/> and click MODULE 6.

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*"CONNECT For Success" adapted from James Madison University's "Go for the Gold" Information Literacy Program (<http://www.lib.jmu.edu/library/gold/modules.htm>).*

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**Eastern Shore Community College**  
**Learning Resources Center**

