Website Evaluation - Just C.A.R.T. it!

The Internet gives us access to A LOT of information but not all of it is reliable. When we use it to do research we must do our best to find accurate and reliable information. So, how can you tell if information from a website is accurate and reliable?

Let’s look closely at the following criteria that we will use to evaluate a website:

**CURRENT ACCESSIBLE RELEVANT TRUSTWORTHY**

**CURRENT**
If your topic is time-sensitive, (for example: you need to find the most recent population of the U.S.) then you need to make sure information you use is up to date. Look for a copyright date or “modified” date, usually on the bottom of the web page. Be cautious of web pages with broken links (links that go nowhere) – this is a good sign that the web page hasn’t been updated recently so you should consider using another source.

If your topic is not time-sensitive (for example: researching the life of the Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh Hatshepsut), then up-to-date information isn’t as important. In that case, continue to evaluate the web page based on the following criteria:

**ACCESSIBLE**
Can you read and understand the information on the page? Are the graphics well organized and appropriate? If not, look for another source that is written at a level that you can easily read and understand.

**RELEVANT**
Does the page have enough information about your topic? Is it specific enough? If not, look for another source.

**TRUSTWORTHY**
Has it been fact-checked? Can you find the author or editor’s name? If not, look for an “About Us” or “FAQs” link or check the Home Page for information about the author, editor, or organization responsible for the website. If that information is missing you should consider using another source. Trustworthy websites make it a point to tell us where the information comes from so we can get a better understanding of who is responsible for it.

Remember: before you use information from a website, C.A.R.T. it before you use it!
21st Century Information Literacy Skills

Students who are “information literate” know ...

• what they are looking for
  (what kind of information do you need?)
• where to find it
  (books, Internet, databases, interviews?)
• how to access it
  (ToC, index, keywords, search terms)
• how to evaluate it
  (how do you know it’s good information?)
• how to use it ethically
  (take notes, cite sources)

Finding Information on the Internet

When searching the Internet, a careful look at the URL (web address) will give you a clue to where the information comes from - especially the domain name.

**Domain Name**: Part of the URL (web address). It helps identify the source of information.

examples:

- http://www.google.com = URL for Google, a commercial (business-related) search engine
- http://www.mit.edu = URL for Massachusetts Institute of Technology, an educational institution

**Common domains:**

- .com (usually for-profit company)
- .edu (educational institution)
- .gov (government)
- .int (international organization)
- .mil (military)
- .org (usually non-profit organization)
- .uk (example of a country domain: United Kingdom)