

WEB EVALUATION CARS – Credibility Accuracy Reasonableness Support - WORKSHEET

When using the internet for research you should evaluate the websites used. The CARS checklist (<http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm>) is outlined below. When evaluating a Website ask yourself the following questions and then use the ones that have the best evidence of: **CREDIBILITY, ACCURACY, REASONABLENESS and SUPPORT.**

CREDIBILITY	Goal: A source that is created by a person or organisation who knows the subject and who cares about its quality
<p>Look at the URL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a publishing or sponsoring organisation? Is the organisation an authority on the subject? What type of domain is it: <input type="checkbox"/> .edu; <input type="checkbox"/> .com; <input type="checkbox"/> .gov; <input type="checkbox"/> .org; Which country does it originate: : <input type="checkbox"/> .au (Australia); <input type="checkbox"/> .uk (United Kingdom); <input type="checkbox"/> none (United States); <input type="checkbox"/> other <p>Check the Author</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the author listed? Is the author an authority on the subject? How do you know? Look up the author in Google <p>Author: _____ Credentials: _____</p>	
ACCURACY	Goal: A source with information that is current, complete and correct.
<p>Read through the site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the site agree with other sources? Yes/No Does the site contradict itself? Yes/No What is the date of publication or copyright? _____ Is this recent enough? Yes/No When the site was last updated? _____ Is this recent enough? Yes/No Are there spelling errors, grammar errors, dead links or other problems that indicate a lack of quality control? Yes/No _____ 	
REASONABLENESS	Goal: A source that is truthful and unbiased.
<p>Analyse the motivation of the site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the author, host, publisher or sponsor have a bias? Yes/no _____ What is the motivation or purpose for creating the site? The purpose of the page is: <input type="checkbox"/> inform facts data; <input type="checkbox"/> educate <input type="checkbox"/> explain; <input type="checkbox"/> persuade; <input type="checkbox"/> sell; <input type="checkbox"/> entice <input type="checkbox"/> share/disclose; <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ 	
SUPPORT	Goal: A source with verifiable sources of information
<p>Look for these indicators of quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the sources listed? Yes/No Are they well documented? Yes/No Are there links to other sites? Yes/No Do they work? Yes/No Is there a way to contact the author or organisation? Email: _____ 	

Where should you look to find this information?

Ideally, information such as the author, host organization, and publication date will be easily located at either the top or bottom of the page or even on another page. However, you may need to dig deeper.

Look at the URL, "About" page; "Contact Us" page; shorten the domain name (delete anything after the first "/").

Tip: Save some work by creating your bibliographic citation while you evaluate. Many of the elements you need to cite a web page in Harvard Style (author, publisher, date, etc.) are the same ones you need to evaluate its quality. If more than a few of these are missing, the site is probably not a good one.

Is the source a source of common knowledge, does it need to be cited as an original source, or is it a mixture of both?	For what purpose would you use the source in your research – as research to cite or for general background knowledge?	Overall quality of the source (1-5 scale, 5 is outstanding, 1 is poor)

Support

The area of support is concerned with the source and corroboration of the information. Much information, especially statistics and claims of fact, comes from other sources. Citing sources strengthens the credibility of the information. (Remember this when you write a research paper.)

Source Documentation or Bibliography

Where did this information come from? What sources did the information creator use? Are the sources listed? Is there a bibliography or other documentation? Does the author provide contact information in case you wish to discuss an issue or request further clarification? What kind of support for the information is given? How does the writer know this? It is especially important for statistics to be documented. Otherwise, someone may be just making up numbers. Note that some information from corporate sites consists of descriptions of products, techniques, technologies, or processes with which the corporation is involved. If you are careful to distinguish between facts ("We mix X and Y together to get Z") and advertising ("This protocol is the best in the industry"), then such descriptions should be reliable.

Corroboration

See if other sources support this source. Corroboration or confirmability is an important test of truth. And even in areas of judgment or opinion, if an argument is sound, there will probably be a number of people who adhere to it or who are in some general agreement with parts of it. Whether you're looking for a fact (like the lyrics to a song or the date of an event), an opinion (like whether paper or plastic is the more environmentally friendly choice), or some advice (like how to grow bromeliads), it is a good idea to triangulate your findings: that is, find at least three sources that agree. If the sources do not agree, do further research to find out the range of opinion or disagreement before you draw your conclusions.

What you are doing with corroboration, then, is using information to test information. Use one source, fact, point of view, or interpretation to test another. Find other information to support and reconfirm (or to challenge or rebut) information you have found.

Corroboration is especially important when you find dramatic or surprising information (information failing the moderateness test, above). For example, the claim that a commonly used food additive is harmful should be viewed with skepticism until it can be confirmed (or rebutted) by further research. The claim may be true, but it seems unlikely that both government and consumer organizations would let the additive go unchallenged if indeed it were harmful.

External Consistency

While the test of corroboration involves finding out whether other sources contain the same new information as the source being evaluated, the test of external consistency compares what is familiar in the new source with what is familiar in other sources. That is, information is usually a mixture of old and new, some things you already know and some things you do not. The test of external consistency asks, Where this source discusses facts or ideas I already know something about, does the source agree or harmonize or does it conflict, exaggerate, or distort? The reasoning is that if a source is faulty where it discusses something you already know, it is likely to be faulty in areas where you do not yet know, and you should therefore be cautious and skeptical about trusting it.

Indicators of a

As you can readily guess, the lack of supporting evidence provides the

Lack of Support

best indication that there is indeed no available support. Be careful, then, when a source shows problems like these:

- Numbers or statistics presented without an identified source for them
- Absence of source documentation when the discussion clearly needs such documentation
- You cannot find any other sources that present the same information or acknowledge that the same information exists (lack of corroboration)