Website Evaluation Criteria

Authority

- Can you tell who is the creator? Does he/she have any special qualifications on this subject?
- Is there an institution/organization sponsoring the site? (You may have to go back a few levels or check some of the links to find out). What clues indicate if the organization has a particular bias or agenda?
- What is the "top domain" in the URL of the site? (e.g. .org, .com, .edu, .gov, .net, etc.)
- Is contact information provided for the creator(s) or webmaster?
- To see who owns the domain name, search the domain name in Network Solutions "whois" records at http://www.networksolutions.com/en_US/whois/index.jhtml
- To see what others think of the site (what pages link to this site), try a link search on google.com Type link:thedomainofthesite in the search box (that is, type the word link, followed by a colon, then no space, then the domain of the site you want to evaluate, for example link:greeningearthsociety.org).

Purpose

- What do you think the purpose of the site is? Consider what benefits the author or sponsor derives from this site.

Audience

- At what audience is this website directed?

Accuracy/Objectivity

- Does the information seem accurate and objectively presented?

  - OR -

- Does the site appear to have a bias or express undocumented opinions? Is the information one-sided or subjective or does it appear questionable?
- Are there spelling or typographical errors, or flaws or strengths in the format and appearance that give you clues as to the reliability of this site?
- Are there references or links that lead to useful information or that verify statements on the page?

Content

- Is the content informative and useful?
- Does the website cover the topic adequately?

Currency

- Can you tell when the site was last updated or if the information seems up-to-date? Check "Page Info" on Netscape or type javascript:alert(document.lastModified) into the URL address box
- Do the links work? Some topics do not require frequent updates, but you may want to know whether anyone is maintaining the site.
Summary

- What is your overall assessment of the site? Useful? Good reliable source? Joke? Junk? Useful only to show a particular viewpoint? Would this be a good source of information for a research paper?

Many other Web sites discuss Web evaluation criteria:

- Evaluating Information - Applying the CRAAP test  
  http://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/evalsites.html
- Evaluating Internet Resources (University of Albany Libraries)  
  http://library.albany.edu/internet/evaluate.html
- Evaluating Information Found on the Internet  
  http://milton.mse.jhu.edu/researchhelp/general/evaluating/index.html
- Evaluating Web Pages: A Web Quest (Teachers page, grades 9-12)  
  http://mciu.org/~spijweb/evalwebteach.html  
  (Joy Valenza, Springfield Township Highschool)
- The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: or, Why It's a Good Idea to Evaluate Web Sources  
  http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/eval.html  
  (Susan Beck, New Mexico State University Library)
- Evaluating Web Resources  
  http://www2.widener.edu/Wolfgram-Memorial-Library/webevaluation/webeval.htm  
  (Jan Alexander and Marsha Ann Tate, Widener University)
  http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/hoax/index.htm  
  (UCLA College Library)
- Hoax Sites (dmoz Open Directory Project)  
  http://dmoz.org/Reference/Education/Instructional_Technology/Evaluation/Web_Site_Evaluation/
- ICYouSee: T is for Thinking  
  http://www.ithaca.edu/library/training/think.html
- Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators: Critical Evaluation Information  
  http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/eval.html
- Quick: the Quality Information Checklist (audience: K-8, includes quiz)  
  http://www.hfht.org/chiq/Quick/docs/index.html
- Thinking Critically about World Wide Web Resources  
  http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/critical/index.htm  
  (Esther Grassian, UCLA College Library)
- TILT: Texas Information Literacy Tutorial  
  http://tilt.lib.utsystem.edu/
- What can the Web address (URL) tell you about a site's scholarly value  
- Who Dunnit: What Kind of Web Page Is This??  
  http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/college/help/whodunnit/index.htm