

# Evaluate Web Pages

## How to Recognize an Advocacy Page

An Advocacy Web Page is one sponsored by an organization attempting to influence public opinion (that is, one trying to sell ideas). The URL Address of the page frequently ends in .org (organization). Examples:

- [National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League](#)
- [The National Right to Life Committee](#)
- [the Democratic Party](#)
- [the Republican Party](#)

## How to Recognize an Informational Web Page

An Informational Web Page is one whose purpose is to present factual information. The URL frequently ends in .edu, .org or .gov, as many of these pages are sponsored by educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, or government agencies. Examples:

- [dictionaries](#)
- [thesauri](#)
- [directories](#)
- [calendars of events](#)
- [statistical data](#)

and other factual information such as reports, presentations of research, or information about a topic.

## How to Recognize a Business/Marketing Web Page

A Business/Marketing Web Page is one sponsored by a commercial enterprise - frequently the page is trying to promote or sell products. The URL usually ends in .com (commercial). Examples:

- [Adobe Systems, Inc.](#)
- [Procter & Gamble](#)
- [CDNow](#)

## How to Recognize a Personal Home Page

A Personal Home Page is one published by an individual who may or may not be affiliated with a larger institution. Although the address of the page may have a variety of endings (e.g. .com, .edu, etc.), a tilde (~) is frequently embedded somewhere in the URL.

## How to Recognize a News Web Page

A News Web Page is one whose primary purpose is to provide current information. The URL usually ends in .com. Examples:

## Evaluate Web Pages

- [USA Today](#)
- [CNN](#)
- [Cincinnati City Beat](#)

### Questions to Ask about Web Pages

Note: The greater number of questions listed below answered "yes", the more likely the source is of high quality. The questions in Bold Type must be answered "yes" for the source to be of value in your research.

#### Criterion #1: AUTHORITY

- Is it clear who wrote the material, and are the author's qualifications for writing on this topic clearly stated?
- Is it clear who or what organization/company is sponsoring the page?
- Is there a link to a page describing the goals or purpose of the organization, or the nature of the company?
- Is there a way of verifying the legitimacy of the organization or the page's sponsor? That is, is there a phone number or postal address to contact for more information? (Simply an email address is not enough.)
- Is there a statement that the content of the page has the official approval of the organization?
- Is the name of the copyright holder given?

Examples:

- [Oncolink](#)
- [Tobacco Control Archives](#)
- [The Smoking Section](#)

#### Criterion #2: ACCURACY

- Are the sources for any factual information clearly listed so they can be verified in another source? (If not, the page may still be useful to you as an example of the ideas of the organization, but it is not useful as a source of factual information).
- Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, and other typographical errors? (These kinds of errors indicate a lack of quality control and can actually produce inaccuracies in information.)
- If there are charts and/or graphs, are they clearly labeled and easy to read?
- Are there editors monitoring the accuracy of the information being published?

Examples:

- [The Quotations Page](#)
- [Handgun Control, Inc.](#)

## Evaluate Web Pages

- [Fables, Myths & Other Tall Tales About Gun Laws, Crime and Constitutional Rights](#)

### Criterion #3: OBJECTIVITY

- If there is any advertising on the page, is it clearly differentiated from the informational content?
- Is the information provided as a public service?
- Are any biases apparent on the part of the author or the sponsoring organization?
- For any given piece of information, is the organization or person's motivation for providing it clear?
- Are editorials and opinion pieces clearly labeled?

Examples:

- [Growth Hormone - Proven Scientific Information](#)
- [PETA Online](#)
- [Americans for Medical Progress Educational Foundation](#)

### Criterion #4: CURRENCY

Are there dates on the page to indicate:

- When the page was written?
- When the page was first placed on the Web?
- When the page was last revised?
- Are there any other indications that the material is kept current?
- If material is presented in graphs or charts, is it clearly stated when the data was gathered?
- If the information is published in different editions (as in the case of dictionaries), can you tell which edition the page is from?

Examples:

- [USA Today](#)
- [Roget's Thesaurus](#)

### Criterion #5: COVERAGE

- Is there an indication that the page has been completed, and is not still under construction?
- Is it clear what topics the page intends to address?
- Does the page succeed in addressing these topics, or has something significant been left out?
- Is the point of view of the organization presented in a clear manner with its arguments well supported?

## Evaluate Web Pages

- If there is a print equivalent to the web page, is it clear whether the entire work is available on the Web or only parts of it?
- If the material is from a work which is out of copyright (as is often the case with a dictionary or thesaurus), has there been an effort made to update the material?

Examples:

- [Lexington Herald-Leader](#)
- [Rolling Stone Network](#)
- [Chronicle of Higher Education](#)

Adapted from Widener University/Wolfgram Memorial Library's Evaluating Web Resources, © Copyright Jan Alexander & Marsha Ann Tate 1996-2003. Posted with permission.