Evaluating Web Sources for Research Papers

When determining if a source is valid and appropriate for your paper. Ask yourself these questions.

Author: Who is the author? If you can’t tell who wrote an article, essay, or study, you might want to reconsider using this source. Keep in mind that the author might be an organization.

Credentials: What are the author’s credentials? Does the article list any degrees, professional affiliations, or describe any experience the author has with the subject?

Publication Information: How and where was the source published or made available to the public? What is the website's URL? Pay particular attention to the last part of the domain name. Look for .edu or .org or .gov. These are generally better sources for information.

About: Is there an About page or a link to more information about the sponsoring organization? Organizations may have a mission statement that reveals a particular bias or stance.

Date: When was the source published or updated? Does the date matter for your research project?

The above is adapted from the University of Maryland’s writing center.

Examples:

<http://www.dhmo.org/facts.html>

<https://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-technology/faq-geneically-modified-food/en/>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180115005731/http://martinlutherking.org/>