EVALUATING INTERNET SOURCES

Not everything you see online is true. That’s why it’s so important to screen websites before you use them to help with homework or for information in a school report.

Use this checklist to figure out if the online source you’re using is reliable.

Evaluate the WEBSITE

☑️ What is the domain? Look at the Web address for clues about what kind of website you’re using.

- **Reliable**
  - .edu: a school, college, or university
  - .gov: a government agency
- **Check carefully**
  - .com: a commercial business
  - .net: a network
  - .org: an advocacy group

☐ Is it easy to navigate? A reliable website will make it easy to find what you need.

☐ Are there a lot of errors? Spelling and grammar mistakes probably mean it’s not trustworthy.

Evaluate the AUTHOR

☐ Is there an author listed? The author should be easy to identify and contact.

☐ Is he/she an expert? The author should be qualified to write on this subject.

☐ What else has he/she published? An author is more reliable if he or she has published other works.

Evaluate the INFORMATION

☐ Is it current and accurate? The information should be up to date and include references.

☐ Can you find it on other sites? Make sure the information appears in other reliable sources, including websites, books, and articles.

☐ Is it fact or opinion? Be sure to note when you’re using someone’s opinion and when you’re using proven facts.

Hint

Trust your gut! If something doesn’t seem right, it probably isn’t.

NetSmartz.org/TipSheets