

## ENGLISH 183 – EVALUATION OF WEB SOURCES

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The World Wide Web is a source of endless information. However, some of this information is of questionable value. It is, therefore, important to evaluate **Web sources** according to the criteria stated in the 183 course book (pp. 19-20). That is, the evaluation has to be done according to the following:

- **Authority** – Is the author of the source reputable?
- **Accuracy/Coverage** – Does the source use other sources to support statements? Is the information accurate? Does it cover all aspects of the matter?
- **Currency** – Is the source current or up-to-date?
- **Purpose/Audience** – Is the source suitable for health sciences students/for academic research?
- **Objectivity** – Is the source objective or unbiased?

The above criteria apply to both **Web sources** and **printed sources**. However, the techniques of evaluation in each case may not necessarily be the same. Let us consider authority, currency and objectivity.

**Authority:** Information about the author (qualifications/expertise) can easily be found in a printed source such as a book. This is more difficult with a Web source since the author is not always made clear. Therefore, look for the following:

- The publisher of the Web site is reputable.
- The publisher of the Web site represents an academic institution or a well-known/an official organization.

**Currency:** Almost all printed sources have publication dates. A lot of Web sources do not. Therefore, to ensure your source is current, look for the following:

- The Web source has no publication date, but the site is regularly updated.
- The (updated) date is visible at the end of the Web source (i.e. the independent document/article) or on the site's home page.

**Objectivity:** To check the objectivity of a Web source, look for the following:

- The information provided is sponsored by a reputable organization and is not just part of someone's personal Web site.
- The information provided is a public service.
- The source is free of advertising.
- If there is advertising, the information is clearly distinguished from the advertising.

\* Adapted in part from Using the World Wide Web as a learning resource by Tony Chafer, Portsmouth University.