# Evaluating Internet Websites

When using the Internet for research, critical thinking is always necessary because the Internet contains so many different types of websites. How do you evaluate a website? What types of things should you look for? What is important about a site you are looking at? First, remember that websites serve different audiences and purposes: informational, general public, commercial/marketing, advocacy, news, personal interests, and many more! The following chart lists evaluation points that can be applied to an Internet source you are considering using for research purposes.

| Purpose | ➢ Is there a statement of purpose? Is it clear?  
> Does the site fulfill its intended purpose?  
> Who is the target viewing audience? |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Content | ➢ How unique is the information?  
> Is the information educational or academic?  
> What is the depth of coverage?  
> Are there links to further resources?  
> Are the links briefly described (annotated)?  
> Are the links relevant to the overall topic(s)? |
| Currency/Timeliness | ➢ Is the site maintained and updated regularly? If so, is there a date?  
> Does the site contain outdated information?  
> Are there dead links?  
> Is there a contact person for feedback, suggestions, comments, etc? |
| Authority/Credibility | ➢ Who is the author/creator of the site? What are their credentials?  
> Does an organization or group sponsor the site? Why?  
> Is the page factual or opinion based, or a combination of the two?  
> Does the author list their sources or references?  
> Where is the information from?  
> Is the site peer-reviewed or connected to another site?  
> Are there obvious errors (typos, grammar, etc)?  
> Can you contact the author/creator of the site? If so, did they respond? |
| Navigation | ➢ Is the site easy to use? Are sections of the page easy to get to?  
> Is there a site map or other directional help?  
> Is there a home or homepage button?  
> Is there a search engine available for site-specific searching? |
| Ease of use | ➢ Is the web site often busy or slow to load on the screen?  
> Are there any subscription fees or is the site free?  
> Are there registration or membership requirements? |
| Design/Style | ➢ Are the graphics appropriate or distracting?  
> Is the overall design of the site pleasant or easy to look at for a long period of time?  
> Does the design add or take away from the content information on the site?  
> Is the text easy to read and legible?  
> Is the background dark or light? Is there a ‘printer-friendly’ version available? |
| Performance | ➢ Are the graphics appropriate for the page?  
> Is the site available for a hearing-impaired audience? Is there a text-only option?  
> Does the site work well with different browsers?  
> Are there additional software requirements? If so, does the site direct where to go for downloads? |