

Is the Web a good research tool?

Note: The greater number of questions listed below answered "yes," the more likely it is you can determine whether the source is of high information quality.

Authority

1. Is it clear who is responsible for the contents of the page?
2. Is there a link to a page describing the purpose of the sponsoring organization?
3. Is there a way of verifying the legitimacy of 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).
4. Is it clear who wrote the material?
5. Are the author's qualifications for writing on this topic clearly stated?
6. If the material is protected by copyright, is the name of the copyright holder given?

Accuracy

1. Are the sources for any factual information clearly listed so they can be verified in another source?
2. Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, and other typographical errors? (These kinds of errors not only indicate a lack of quality control, but can actually produce inaccuracies in information).
3. Is it clear who has the ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of the content of the material?
4. If there are charts and/or graphs containing statistical data, are the charts and/or graphs clearly labeled and easy to read?

Objectivity

1. Is the information provided as a public service?
2. Is the information free of advertising?
3. If there is any advertising on the page, is it clearly differentiated from the informational content?

Currency

1. Are there dates on the page to indicate:
 - a. When the page was written?
 - b. When the page was first placed on the Web?
 - c. When the page was last revised?
2. Are there any other indications that the material is kept current?
3. If material is presented in graphs and/or charts, is it clearly stated when the data was gathered?
4. If the information is published in different editions, is it clearly labeled what edition the page is from?

Coverage

1. Is there an indication that the page has been completed, and is not still under construction?
2. If there is a print equivalent to the Web page, is there a clear indication of whether the entire work is available on the Web or only parts of it?
3. If the material is from a work that is out of copyright (as is often the case with a dictionary or thesaurus) has there been an effort to update the material to make it more current?