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How do I know if something online is a reliable source of information?

KEY WORDS

credible source | experts | criteria 🔍

Determining the reliability of online information is an essential skill, particularly as you spend more time navigating the internet for both study and fun. That's why knowing how to filter out the **misinformation** from real facts can help you with everything from academic research, personal browsing of websites, or simply just to stay well-informed.

As the internet is a huge treasure chest of information, here are some criteria and their related questions that you can ask yourself to see if you're on the right track towards finding out the truth:

AUTHORSHIP ✓

- Has the author's name, credentials, and qualifications been provided, or the name of an organisation they represent?

TOPICALITY ✓

- Is the creation date of the page containing the information provided, and are the published materials stamped with a date?
- Is the content regularly updated?
- Is the information current as per the present state of knowledge in the field you're researching?

ACCURACY ✓

- Is the information formulated in a logical and understandable way for you?
- Is the information detailed enough to solve the problem that prompted your search?
- Has the information been enriched with links or references that go beyond the presented knowledge?

OBJECTIVITY ✓

- Is the page sponsored? Does it contain ads or propaganda content?
- Does the information include the author's own emotionally charged opinions, clearly distinguished from the rest of the content?
- Is the information based on facts?

RELEVANCE ✓

- Is the information relevant to the topic of your search and helpful in solving your problem?
- Is the information useful to you in its entirety?
- Is the theme of the text relevant to the purpose and audience intended by the page's author?

CREDIBILITY ✓

- Is the source of the information available? Is the information primary or secondary[1]?
- Can the information be verified with other sources?
- Do links to the page come from sources recognised as credible and of proven quality?
- Is the purpose of publishing the information stated?

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If your source checks off all of the criteria above, congratulations! You can feel safe and responsible about your online decisions!

[1] Primary sources offer a firsthand account or direct evidence of an event. Secondary sources, on the other hand, involve the interpretation or analysis of primary sources.

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