

# Evaluating Websites Lesson

Mr. Schatkun

1. Many colleges and universities have a library webpage with a link to how websites should be evaluated. One of the best that I have found is at Lesly University. To get to the correct page, log on to your computer’s desktop, open an Internet browser, and type “Lesly evaluating websites” in the search bar (use Google or Yahoo). The first hit should be: [http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating\\_web.html](http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating_web.html). Click on it, or type it in the address bar, and click on the arrow to the right.
2. Eight different criteria for evaluating websites are presented; we will focus on four in this lesson: Purpose, Authority, Objectivity, and Currency. We will also look at Hoaxes.
3. **Purpose:** Six domain name extensions are listed in the “Purpose” section. Fill in the following table with a one-word description of each domain name extension, and place an X in the box for “Reliable” or “May not be reliable” source of information. The first one is completed as an example:

Domain name extension	Domain name description	Reliable	May not be reliable
.gov	government	X	
.net			
.com			
.edu			
.mil			
~			
.org			

- a. Directly under Purpose is a link to NANODOCS. Click on it, and browse the site. Then answer the following questions:
    1. On the home page, it says that Nanodocs are in fact nanotech robots that live and travel in a patient’s bloodstream, can attack bacteria and viruses, and are capable of removing plaque from arterial walls. Does that sound like legitimate science, or is it more like science fiction? \_\_\_\_\_
    2. Click on the Disclaimer at the bottom of the home page. Does it sound legitimate? \_\_\_\_\_ (Hint: “This information is **not** intended to be patient education.”)
    3. Click on Contact Us in the upper right of the home page. “If you are an RYT Hospital patient or family member, please log-in.” Did you find a log-in? \_\_\_\_\_
    4. What is the domain name extension for this website? \_\_\_\_\_ If the site was really legitimate, what would be the domain name extension instead? \_\_\_\_\_
    5. Try clicking on the “male pregnancy” tab, followed by the “science of male pregnancy” tab. Now, what do you think is the true purpose of this website? \_\_\_\_\_
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4. **Authority:** The link to “Growing herbs in the home garden” does not work properly. Instead, go to a search engine (e.g., Google or Yahoo), and type the link in the search bar using quotation marks. The website that contains all the words in the quotation in the exact order is <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/cook/downloads/9218.pdf>. Click on it. Then answer the questions in the Authority section:

- a. Who is the author? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What are his credentials? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Does he have sufficient authority to speak on the subject? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Is there a way to reach him? \_\_\_\_ (Hint: Do a Google search for “Schmidt horticulturist Illinois” and choose <http://cropsci.illinois.edu/directory/schmidt1>)
- e. Is there an organizational or corporate sponsor? \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Is this page authentic, or is it a hoax? \_\_\_\_\_

5. **Objectivity:** Click on the link below Objectivity; then, answer the questions below:

- a. Does the content reflect a bias? (Hint: Read the conclusions at the end of the abstract)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. Is the bias explicit or hidden? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Does the identity of the author or sponsor suggest a bias? (Hint: Find the identity of the group who provided the funding for this article at the bottom of the References list, and ask yourself, “Does this sponsor have financial reasons to publish biased information?”)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. How does the bias impact the usefulness of the information? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. **Currency:** Click on the CNN link; then answer the following questions:

- a. Is the information on the page up-to-date? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Can you tell when the page was last updated? Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Are there dead links? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Is there a difference between the date the information was created and the date the page was last updated? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, give an example. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. **Hoaxes:** Some websites in this section are hoaxes, but can seem legitimate and convincing at first sight. Underline the ones that are hoaxes:

- a. <http://www.thekingcenter.org/> or [martinlutherking.org](http://martinlutherking.org)
- b. <http://gatt.org> or <http://www.wto.org>
- c. <http://www.onion.com> or <http://147.129.226.1/library/research/AIDSFACTS.htm>

8. How would you rank the criteria for evaluating websites discussed in this lesson in order of importance?

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_