

Evaluating Web Pages

General Tips

- Don't accept everything you read just because it's printed on a web page. Unlike scholarly books and journal articles, web sites are seldom reviewed or refereed.
- It's up to you to check for bias and determine objectivity. Try to distinguish between promotion, advertising, and serious content. One way to do this is to examine who the author is.
- Verify information by looking at similar sites.

Elements of Reputable Web Pages

Reputable web pages generally have the following information:

- Last date page was updated
- Email link for questions and comments
- Name, address, telephone number and address of page owner
- Author's credentials or his sources of authority

Domains

You can judge a web page by its author or publisher. The domain indicates the authorship of a page. For example, in the following URL, <http://www.sc.edu/beaufort/library/bones.html>, the domain, edu, shows that the page is part of an educational site.

Common Domains

Domains of pages that are usually reliable

- .edu—educational site
- .gov—U.S. government/non-military site
- .mil—U.S. military sites and agencies

Domains of pages that may require verification

- .com—commercial, business site
- .net—networks, ISPs, organizations
- .org—U.S. non-profit organizations and others

New Domains (as of 2001)

- .info—general information
- .biz—businesses
- .name—individuals
- .pro—professionals
- .museum—museums
- .coop—business cooperatives
- .aero—aviation industry
- .tv—television

The Final Word--Documentation and Web Page Stability

The page you cite today may be altered, revised, or gone tomorrow. When you are using web pages as source material for a paper, keep a backup of what you find on the web, either as a printout or saved to disk, so you can consult your sources later if need be.