EVALUATING INFORMATION

When you use a search engine such as Google to locate information posted on the web, you must evaluate the credibility of the information you find before using it in your assignment. Identify all of the following:

- **Its EXPERTISE**
  - a.k.a. **AUTHORITY**
  - Consider the site’s source domain. The following are generally true, but not always!
    - .com = commercial (for profit) site
    - .org = not-for-profit site
    - .edu = educational site
    - .gov = government site
    - ~ or % users, members, .net = personal site
  - Locate the author of the content. Determine the author’s credentials—her education and work history—to decide if her background qualifies her as an expert on this topic.
  - If there is no named author, then scan the page to find its copyright notice (©) which names the person or organization taking publication credit for the content. If that organization is well-known and well-respected, it could be considered the author.

- **Its POINT OF VIEW**
  - a.k.a. **BIAS**
  - Consider the purpose and tone of the web page. Read “About” the organization to learn its mission, leadership, and history. Beware of sites with an agenda to sell, entice, persuade, advocate, or disclose. Take caution if the site contains more opinion than fact, or makes use of emotional or exaggerated language.
  - Look for citations, links, and other sources that provide documentation for claims made on the page. Click through hyperlinks and judge how reliable and reputable the linked sources are. If links are well-organized, that’s a good sign; if links don’t work, that’s not-so-good.

- **Its PUBLICATION DATE**
  - a.k.a. **CURRENCY**
  - Look for an indicator regarding when the information was published. A notice of when the page was “Last updated” is best, but the copyright (©) date can also be used as a gauge.
  - Take note if it appears that the site has not been updated in a long time. Consider if the information is current enough to be valid regarding the topic you’re investigating.
Use this worksheet to determine the **credibility** of one website that you’ll be assigned to review.

I was assigned to evaluate (mark one): ☐ Site A ☐ Site B

Copy here the first segment of the web address, which is the URL for the hosting website:

______________________________________________________________________________

What is the domain for this website? What type of site does that indicate it probably is?

______________________________________________________________________________

1. **Who wrote it?**
What is the author’s expertise? What is her/his profession and education? Is s/he an expert on this topic?

2. **What is the site’s point of view? Is it biased or unbiased?**
   (a) Read “About” the host website to learn: Why does this website exist? What is its stated mission or purpose?

   (b) Are sources cited? Are there links to other pages, of what quality?

3. **When was it published?**
Is this information current? Is that important for this topic?

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Is the webpage good enough to use for college research? Does it have strong **EXPERTISE**, unbiased **POINT OF VIEW**, and good **CURRENCY**?