



Think Critically About Information and Services

Who?

It is important to understand who prepared the information, whether it is an article, a book, a website, or a conversation. Try to determine if the source is trustworthy and qualified. Look carefully at the following information:

- What are the author’s credentials?
- What organization supports the information or its author?
- If it’s an Internet website, read the “About Us” section to find out more about the author.
- If it’s an Internet website, see if it ends in “.gov” or “.edu.” These sites tend to have reliable information. Sites ending in “.org” may have reliable information, but some may not. Sites ending in “.com” are commercial sites with a business goal that may influence their information.



What?

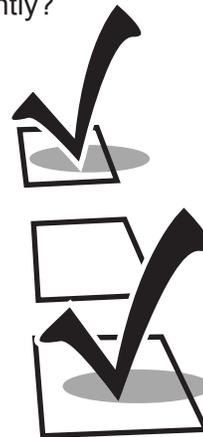
Review the content of the information to determine how accurate it is. Try to determine if the source is correct and truthful. Look carefully at the following information:

- Is the information accurate? Can it be confirmed in two additional places?
- Does the source give references and statistics to back up its information?
- Has the information been edited or reviewed by reliable sources for quality and accuracy?
- Is the information free of errors in spelling and grammar? Do the Internet links in the article work?

When?

Check when the information or product was created and how up-to-date it is. Try to determine if the source is correct and current. Look carefully at the following information:

- Does the information have a recent date?
- Does it contain current statistics?
- Has it been updated recently?



Why?

Try to determine the reason the author created it. Is the source truthful, reasonable, and thoughtful? Look carefully at the following information:

- Does the information promote a biased point of view or is it objective and based on facts?
- Is the information paid for by a person or a group that wants to promote an idea or product?
- Does the information contain a political or moral slant?
- Is the information truthful? designed as a spoof? selling something?

Evidence-Based

The phrase “evidence-based” describes programs, medical treatments, policies, and educational methods that have used up-to-date information from relevant, valid research to make decisions. If you answer who, what, when, and why, you have taken a big step towards an evidence-based decision. Testimonials, anecdotes, unsupported claims, and opinions are not the same as objective, **evidence-based** information.

- For more information on identifying reliable resources, visit these websites:
- Evaluating Internet Research Sources*, Robert Harris
<http://www.virtualsalt.com>
 - MedlinePlus Guide to Healthy Web Surfing, National Institutes of Health
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/healthywebsurfing.html