Evaluating Internet Sources

Your high school coursework provides plenty of opportunities to do online research, and you are encouraged to find videos, images, and articles about any of the topics you find interesting. The best way to learn is to follow your interests in any given subject. BE AWARE, however, that many online resources have no basis in fact (or, often, in reality), and even commonly used resources like Wikipedia are full of errors and half-truths. When doing research online, be sure to examine who is the author of what you are reading. Consider their intent and inherent bias. Materials produced by colleges and universities and written by well-known scholars are your best bet for finding meaningful, relevant information to help you with your course.

When you do online research, avoid drawing conclusions before you've checked the information for reliability. Often, you can tell when a website contains bias or is opinion-based. Some sites look very convincing, but contain information that is not supported by scientific evidence or experimentation. When you are uncertain of a source's reliability, consider the following criteria before you decide to use the information in your research:

- The authors make their case based on adequate evidence.
- The authors interpret the data cautiously.
- The authors acknowledge and deal with opposing views or arguments.
- The authors give a list of current sources that support their claims.

Some characteristics of unreliable websites require practice to identify. One trick is to look at the sources that are linked in the article you want to verify. These links can give you some idea of reliability. If your source is linked to a number of questionable sites, it's probably not a good source. Characteristics of unreliable websites:

- The authors make extraordinary claims with little supporting evidence.
- The authors relate evidence based on personal experience instead of referring to controlled studies.
- The author appeals to emotion rather than logic.
- The authors misrepresent or ignore opposing views.
- The arguments are biased to support a political or economic agenda.
- The site is linked to sites that support a particular political or economic agenda.

More guidelines:
Columbia University Libraries
Purdue Online Writing Lab

**Remember: Explore a variety of sites , evaluate their authenticity, and always
CITE YOUR SOURCES!**