Evaluating Websites: The Get REAL Test

**Read the URL:**

- What is the base URL (domain and extension)?
- Do you recognize the domain name?
- What is the extension in the domain name?
- What does this URL extension mean?
- What can you tell about the site by simply reading the domain name (without even visiting the site)?
- Is the site sponsored/hosted by a trusted organization?
- Is it a personal page?
- Is it published using a free web hosting service?

*The implications/importance of these criteria will vary depending on the topic and purpose.*

**Examine the content:**

- Does the site appear useful for your purpose?
- Does the information appear accurate and complete?
- How does it compare to other resources on the same topic?
- Are sources cited? Can you verify key information?
- What is the purpose of the site (inform, persuade, entertain?)
- When was the site last updated?
- How has the site changed over time? Wayback Machine - [http://www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)
- Are there ads on the page? Does that affect the credibility?

**Ask about the author**

- Who wrote the site? Do they provide credentials?
- Look for "About" or Google the author/owner. What kind of results do you get?
- Is there a way to contact the author?
- Does the author seem knowledgeable? Is s/he an expert in the field?

**Look at the links:**

- What does the page or site link to (credible/trusted sources)?
- Do the domain names change?
- What links to this site?
- Why are they linked?
  - Use the Link: command (search engine of choice).
- What do other sites say about the material/content on your site?

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