

# Vale Middle School Reading Article

*Eight Ways to Tell if a Website is Reliable (1430)*

**Instructions: COMPLETE ALL QUESTIONS AND MARGIN NOTES**

**Questions:** Answer in COMPLETE SENTENCES unless otherwise instructed. Lists and charts are the exception and may be answered in phrases.

**Read** the following article carefully and **make notes in the margin** as you read.

Your notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **writer's strategies** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and choices affect the article.

Your **margin notes** are part of your score for this assessment.

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period \_\_\_\_\_

## Eight Ways to Tell if a Website is Reliable

### Beware Bias, Look for Expertise

By Tony Rogers

The Internet can be a wonderful reporting tool for journalists. Data that once was only found in paper documents can now often be accessed with the click of a mouse, and research that once took hours or days can be done in minutes.

But for every reputable website there are probably 100 that are full of information that's inaccurate, unreliable or worse. Here are eight ways to tell if a website is reliable.

#### 1. Look for Sites from Established Institutions

The web is full of websites that were started five minutes ago. What you want are sites associated with trusted institutions that have been around for awhile and have a proven track record of reliability and integrity.

#### 2. Look for Sites with Expertise

You wouldn't go to an auto mechanic if you broke your leg, and you wouldn't go to the hospital to have your car repaired. I'm making an obvious point: Look for

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websites that specialize in the kind of information you're seeking. So if you're writing a story on a flu outbreak, check out medical websites, and so on.

### **3. Steer Clear of Commercial Sites**

Sites run by companies and businesses - their websites usually end in .com - are more often than not trying to sell you something. And if they're trying to sell you something, chances are whatever information they're presenting will be tilted in favor of their product.

### **4. Beware Bias**

Reporters write a lot about politics, and there are plenty of political websites out there. But many of them are run by groups that have a bias in favor of one political party or philosophy. A conservative website isn't likely to report objectively on a liberal politician, and vice versa. Steer clear of sites with a political ax to grind and instead look for ones that are non-partisan.

### **5. Check the Date**

As a reporter you need for the most up-to-date information available, so if a website seems old, it's probably best to steer clear. One way to check - look for a "last updated" date on the page or site.

### **6. Look at the Site's Look**

If a site looks poorly designed and amateurish, chances are it was created by amateurs. Steer clear. But be careful - just because a website is professionally designed doesn't mean it's reliable.

### **7. Avoid Anonymous Authors**

Articles or studies whose authors are named are often - though not always - more reliable than works produced anonymously. It makes sense: If someone is willing to put their name on something they've written, chance are they stand by the information it contains. And if you have the name of the author, you can always Google him or her to check their credentials.

### **8. Check the Links**

Reputable websites often link to each other. See which sites the website you're on links to. Then go to Google and enter the name of the site you are searching. This will show you which sites link to the one you're on. If lots of sites are linking to your site, and of those sites seem reputable, then that's a good sign.

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1. Consider this scenario. You are writing a report about US immigration policies. The website you find has a .com address and is run by a group from Arizona. Would this website most likely be both reliable and unbiased?

2. Consider this scenario. You are researching Osama bin Laden. The website you find is dated October 2001. Would this be a reliable website to use? Explain.

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3. Consider this scenario. Your Health teacher asks you to do some research on heart disease for a report. The website you find has advertisements throughout the article for all types of vitamins that will supposedly cure heart disease. Would this be a reliable site to use for your report? Explain.

4. Consider this scenario. You have been assigned to create and present a PowerPoint about childhood immunizations. You find information some information at MayoClinic.com. The information has sources cited as well as the name of a doctor that wrote the original article. You do a Google search of the author and find that she has a medical degree from Tulane University and has written many research papers. Would this be a reliable site to use? Explain.