Since anyone can publish essentially anything on the Internet it is important to keep in mind that there are some inherent problems with the information found on the Internet. One of the major problems is being able to assess the quality and the accuracy of Internet resources. With no mediator ,such as publisher, or peer review process, between the author and a published document, it is difficult to find out the skills or credentials of the author.

For this reason it is prudent to approach the information on the Internet with caution. It is advisable to ascertain several different sources to support the information acquired from the Internet.

As you visit each site ask yourself:

1. Who would this information be useful to?   myself?   a researcher? Who was the information intended for?

2. Is this information trustworthy? What or who is the original source? What is their authority on the subject? What expertise does the author have in the subject area? What bias might the author have?

3.   Where is the host computer located? Is it an educational, government, organization or a commercial/company site?   What are the publishing organization's credential regarding the subject? What bias might the organization have?

> *http://columbiabc.edu/*

> *edu* indicates an educational institute

> the name of the institute or organization is frequently included in the address

> *http://www.mhsc.ca/*

> *ca* indicates a Canadian site

> *http://www.mla.org/*
> *org* indicates a group or organization

> *http://www.earlychildhood.com/*

> *com* indicates a commercial or company site

4.   Is the site mounted by an individual or representative of a group? Will anyone make a profit from your use of the site or the information it contains?
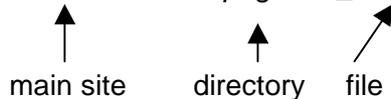
→

http://lucky.innet.com/~kathiw/medical.html

a tilde(~) is like an abbreviation in an WWW address.
It takes you to the person's home directory. It is usually used when someone makes part of a private computer space into a public directory.

http://falcon.cc.unkans.edu/~nsween/

When ~ is used at an educational institute site it often means that a student has created the page.

http://www.columbiabc.edu/pagesFF_alumni.html

main site   directory   file

When the address for a main site is followed by a directory and then a file, it usually indicates that a space has been allocated to a group or smaller institution within a larger organization.

5. Do the webmasters introduce themselves and explain their background and the purpose of the site? If so, usually this will help identify the perspective and authority of the author(s) .

6. Are email addresses provided to contact the webmasters? If so, do the email addresses go to an academic or commercial mailbox? Terms such as *edu, ca, com,* and *gov* represent the same thing in email addresses as they do in World Wide Web sites.

7. Is there a statement to tell you when the page was last updated? The Internet changes daily. Sites that are in one place one day may be in another the next day or may have completely disappeared. For this reason, more reliable sites are updated frequently.

8. Take the time to assess the quality of the links on the pages. Where the page points you to, ultimately reflects on the quality and usefulness of the page itself.

9.   Did the author indicate sources for facts presented?

10. Does the Web material deal with the topic at a level that suits you and the requirements of your assignment? Consult your instructor.

11. Finally, any information transmitted via the Internet is NOT necessarily guaranteed to be secure or confidential. Exercise caution when sending information such as credit   card numbers or other personal information.

Citing the Sites - MLA Style

- See the MLA handbook for Writers of Research Papers - REF 808.027 G437 1999 (section 4.9)
- See the Internet MLA style guide at the Modern Language Association's website:
  http://www.mla.org/
- See the Columbia Bible College Term Paper Guide

This guide was adapted with permission, from "Evaluating Internet Sites", Bracken Library, Queen's University at Kingston, Ontario [1998].