

Guidelines for Evaluating Websites—Teaching American History

1. Authority

Who wrote or created the site?

What is the domain name? Is it appropriate for the content?

.edu - for education sites

.gov - for government sites

.org - for organization sites

.com - for commercial sites

.net - for network infrastructures

or the abbreviation of a country, such as **.jp** for Japan or **.uk** for United Kingdom

How do you find out?

- *Email or contact information*
- *Credits page (look for links that say “About us,” “Philosophy,” “Background”)*
- *Truncate the URL (delete end characters of the URL stopping just before each/). Press enter. Continue if needed until you reach the first single / which is preceded by the domain name portion. This is the page’s server or “publisher.”*

2. Purpose and Objectivity

What is the purpose of the site? (inform? present facts? explain? persuade? sell?)

Does it offer a balanced perspective? Other viewpoints?

Is this a personal page? Is the author a hobbyist or self-proclaimed expert?

Who is the intended audience? How can you tell tone, images, materials available)?

3. Accuracy and Accessibility

Are there grammatical or spelling errors on the site?

Are facts and opinions clearly identified?

Are materials complete or edited?

Are there graphics? What purpose do they serve? Do they add to the content or distract?

Is there advertising? Is it distinct from informational content?

Does the site contain links to other websites? Are the links reliable? Working? Consistent with the theme? Defined or introduced?

4. Currency

When was the site created?

When was the site last revised

5. Credibility

Who links to the site? (Link check—go to google, type “link: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu>“)

Reviews or opinions of it from those who mention it?

Found in any reliable directories? (such as www.google.com)