

# Web Basics for Critical Thinking

1. Use a variety of search engines for best results. Check out UC Berkeley's BEST search engines site for information on how each search engines works (<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/SearchEngines.html>)

2. Validate information on the Web.

Four-step process called REAL:

**R: Read the URL**

Do you recognize the domain name?

What is the extension in the domain name?

Are you on a personal page?

**E: Examine the content**

Ask questions about what you are reading:

Is the information useful for your topic?

Are there additional resources and links provided? Do the links work?

Is the site current? Do you know when it was last updated?

Do you think the information is accurate?

Does the information contradict information you have found elsewhere?

**A: Ask about the Author and Owner**

Is the author's name provided?

Is there a contact person or an address provided?

Is there biographical information provided about the author?

What kinds of results do you see when you do a search on the author?

Find out who owns the web site. Go to <http://www.easywhois.com>.

What is the history of this site? Go to <http://www.archives.org>.

**L: Look at the Links**

**Forward links:**

What are the URLs of the forward links? Look for a range for new info.

Do the domain names change? Bias if all written by same author.

**Back Links:**

Who is linked to the Web site?

Why are they linked?

What do other sites say about the material on the site?

Go to <http://www.altavista.com>, type link:(URL including http)

Also try truncating the address: delete one folder at a time, moving from right to left. Each time delete to the previous left slash (/).

3. Validating Tools

Wayback Machine (<http://www.archive.org>) to see the history of a Web site.

EasyWhols (<http://www.easyhois.com>) to find out whom owns a Web site.

AltaVista (<http://www.altavista.com>) Use the link: command to find the external links from any site.