Evaluating web resources

Why should I evaluate web resources?

- Anyone can publish information on the web (internet)
- There are no official moderators or standards for web content or search engines
- Web resources are constantly changing
- Information you find on the web may be illegal, inaccurate out of date or biased

How can I evaluate web resources?

You can evaluate a web resource by thinking about the following points:

Relevance

Is the site relevant to your research?

Are you looking for information about people belonging to a particular age group, gender and place of origin?

Is the information aimed at a particular audience or level of expertise? Use of technical language assumes knowledge of the subject area and can indicate the audience the information is aimed at.

Is the information presented in an accessible format? Is it easy to search?

Authority

Who has produced the information?

Is it an organisation or an individual person?

Are they a recognised authority/expert on this subject?

Is there a way to contact them?

Are the sources of any information or statistics acknowledged?

Is the information only an extract of a wider piece of research?

Has the site been linked to by other quality web sites?

Objectivity

Is the information biased in any way?

Does the information present a balanced view, or does it only give one opinion?

What is the main purpose of the information?

To inform? To sell a product? Does it feature any adverts?

Accuracy

Are the aims of the site clear?

What is it for? Who is it for?

Does the site achieve its aims?

Does it do what it says it will do?

Is the information accurate?

For example, check that the arguments are supported with independent evidence.

Is the author qualified to write the information?

Has anyone else said the same things anywhere else? If the information is new, is there any proof?

When was the site produced and is it up to date?

When was the information published?

Is the site still current?

Links that don't work or typographical errors may indicate a lack of accuracy in the content and a lack of maintenance of the site.
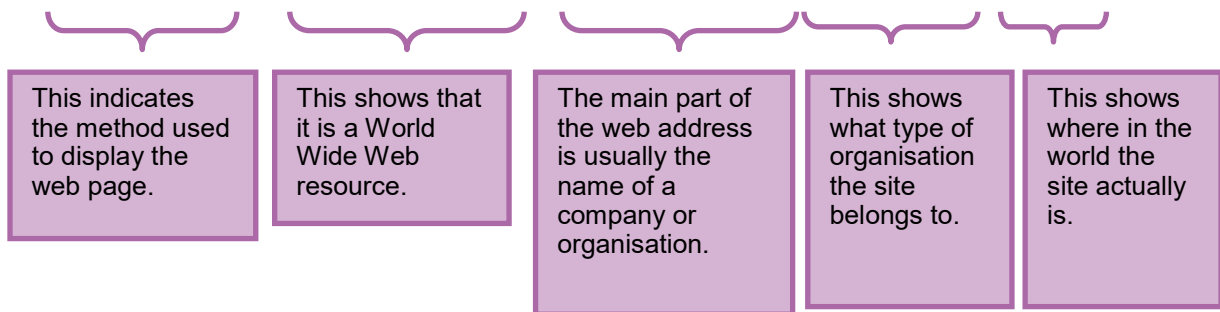
A Quick Guide to URLs

What is a URL?

URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator. A URL is a unique string of characters used to represent a web resource. A URL is also known as a resource's 'web address' or 'domain name'.

A URL is made up of several components which give clues about what sort of website you are viewing. Knowing what these components mean can help you decide about how useful a web resource it is.

http://www.sthk.nhs.uk

| This indicates the method used to display the web page. | This shows that it is a World Wide Web resource. | The main part of the web address is usually the name of a company or organisation. | This shows what type of organisation the site belongs to. | This shows where in the world the site actually is. |

The ending of a URL, or its 'suffix', can give you clues about what kind of organisation it belongs to. Below are listed some URL suffixes that you might recognise, and what they indicate:

.nhs.uk	UK National Health Service site
.co.uk	A UK commercial site
.com	Often a US company, but can be from any-where
.gov.uk	A UK government website
.org.uk	A UK non-profit site
.ac.uk	An academic institution website in the UK
.edu	An academic institution website in the US
Where you have the country of origin at the end e.g. .ac.uk (from the UK) or ac.de (from Germany), if there is no country of origin e.g. .edu, it is usually from the US	

https:// at the beginning of a **URL** indicates a secure site. It is usually seen on sites that you have had to sign into or for making a purchase. Also look for the lock icon which also indicates a secure page.