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## Introduction

The online world is flooded with information, but not all of it can be trusted. With anyone able to create their own website, much of the data available hasn't been vetted like academic journals. Most internet researchers don't get reviewed or fact-checked to ensure accuracy and truthfulness. It's up to users to decide if info is credible. To check a website's credibility, use the ABCs: Accuracy, Authority, Bias, Coverage, Currency. For accuracy, look for sources cited by authors, see if they're reliable, and check if editors or reviewers fact-checked the info. Poor writing might indicate poor research. Authority checks involve seeing if the author's credentials are shown, if they're part of a respected organization, who oversees the site, its purpose, and domain (like .edu or .gov). Personal blogs need closer review. Bias evaluation involves checking if info is opinion-based, has a political or religious motive, contains ads separate from content, and excludes relevant information. Coverage should be comprehensive, not missing details, and not require payment for access. Currency checks involve seeing when the info was published, if it's been kept up-to-date, and how current it needs to be for your research. Additional tips include looking for expert authors or publishers (like NY Times), citing sources, having up-to-date info, unbiased analysis, and comprehensive coverage. For more help with credibility evaluation, use the SIFT method: Stop, Investigate, Find, and Trace claims back to their source. This methodology was created by research scientist Mike Caulfield. To evaluate the credibility of information online, consider sites associated with trusted institutions that have a proven track record of accuracy and integrity. Look for websites specializing in specific types of information, such as medical websites or those run by government agencies. Be wary of sites trying to sell something, as their information may be biased. Steer clear of sites with a political ax to grind and instead opt for non-partisan ones. If a website seems old or poorly designed, it's likely created by amateurs. Sloppy writing is also a bad sign, but don't rely solely on design – check if the author has a byline, as this often indicates reliability. Reputable websites link to each other; try conducting a link-specific Google search to see which sites link back. In today's digital landscape, knowing how to navigate digital sources versus print sources is crucial. Digital sources include ebooks and online newspapers, while some academic journals only publish digitally. However, many unreliable sources are available online. Search engine optimization (SEO) can increase unpaid views on a website from search engines. By using an algorithm that sorts information for relevancy and accuracy, SEO works by locating keywords. Understanding how search engines use SEO is important, as it dictates the initial information presented when searching. Differences in domain extensions help differentiate websites and their purposes. Common domain extensions include .com (commercial), .gov (government), .org (organization), .edu (education), and .net (network). While a website's domain extension doesn't guarantee credibility, knowing this can help you evaluate its reliability. For example, passportUSA.org may appear to contain official instructions but is actually just a PDF editing site. Similarly, National Geographic uses .com despite being a large organization. Don't rely solely on the domain extension – examine authors and other credentials before making assumptions. Wikipedia is a valuable online resource, providing information about certain topics. However, its pages can be edited by anyone, leading to sometimes unreliable information. Users should exercise caution when gathering information from Wikipedia, as not all articles are of encyclopedic quality at first. Look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting tomorrow and discuss our strategies in detail. While it's not encouraged to use Wikipedia as one of your main sources, Wikipedia can be used as a jumping-off point for other sources. At the bottom of most Wikipedia pages, you can find a list of sources that will take you to other pages. An example of a References section from a Wikipedia article that has been carefully sourced. Clickbait Clickbait is a type of sensationalized advertisement that seeks to attract viewers through catchy or seemingly unbelievable headlines. Most sites that use clickbait use it to simply gain "clicks" on their site. When looking for sources online, it's important to recognize which article titles sound like clickbait. Most clickbait articles want to shock the reader, so be aware of words like surprising, alarming, and shocking titles. Another form of clickbait is a page that challenges the viewer to a quiz or test. These will entice the reader by stating that the reader probably cannotanswer each question correctly. An example of a sensationalistic clickbait headline. Understanding which articles are clickbait helps you evaluate your sources for credibility. Because clickbait sources exist simply to promote webpages, they are not considered credible sources. Social Media Social media is simply defined as any type of digital space that allows users to create content and share it with others in a social setting. A few of the most common social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, and Instagram. While social media is not regularly used as a source in research, sometimes you might use a YouTube video or a tweet from a well-known individual. When evaluating social media sites, it's important to know more about a user beyond their username. For example, if you were interested in examining how scientists use Twitter as a platform, you might find yourself quoting a tweet by Bill Nye or the physicist Brian Cox. Both of these individuals have blue checks next to their Twitter handles, which means the accounts are verified. However, you might not want to quote a tweet by someone with an anonymous name and a Twitter handle such as @iluvscience321. Similarly, YouTube videos can either be posted by a large organization or a single user. If you are interested in using a YouTube video in your research, look at whether the publisher is a larger organization (such as TED or National Geographic) or a single user that only publishes under a username. While not all large organizations produce unbiased information, more well-known organizations will most likely provide more credible information. In general, while you will probably not use a lot of social media in your research, if you do, try to locate the people or groups behind the usernames. After you identify the person or organization, you can find out more about them and determine their credibility. Personal Websites Many people have personal websites, such as blogs, that are not associated with a larger group or organization. Blogs can range in subject, from seasonal fashion tips to discussing every one of Emily Dickinson's poems. When evaluating a personal website, find out what you can about the author and their affiliations. Some personal websites exist solely to spread propaganda or other biased information. Podcasts Podcasts are becoming a much more popular digital medium today. Podcasts are essentially audio files that can be streamed on a computer or mobile device, like portable radio. They are usually part of a series or follow a theme. Like YouTube videos, podcasts can be valuable resources if used correctly. While almost anyone can produce a podcast, and topics range from discussing tv shows or books like The Bachelor and Harry Potter, other podcasts give in-depth information about science, history, anthropology, and a wide variety of other topics. For example, podcasts like Stuff You Missed in History Class and Historium Unearthia provide information on often-overlooked historical events. Like most sources, you should try to find out information about the author and cross-check the information in the podcast to see if you can find it elsewhere. Because anyone can produce a podcast, be aware that biased podcasts exist, and some might be used as propaganda. Online News Articles It's possible to find many news articles online, both from digital newspapers and websites that post news articles. When examining online news articles, find out what you can about the organization behind the articles. Different news outlets may have different agendas attached to their reporting. For example, some websites are known for being more left-wing or right-wing. Online Databases Often, the most reliable information you will find on the internet will come from online databases. A database is a large collection of data, usually about one specific topic or idea.A checklist for validating academic information can provide a structured approach to ensure research is grounded in facts and evidence. The first step is to identify who provided the information, as this often hinges on the expertise and reputation of its provider. Author credentials should be checked, including their academic and professional background, institutional affiliation, and peer review status. ###ARTICLECiting Sources with Confidence: How to Tell If a Website Is Credible Many online sources are big red flags. Conclusion You learned: How to ask questions about a source in order to determine credibility How do I know if a website source is credible? Many factors determine whether a given website source is credible or not. A few key features that you need to consider are given below: Origin of the website Check if the website is created by a trustworthy organization or author. You can identify the author from the URL or from the copyright information. Check if the author is related to the topic or field that he or she is talking about. Check if the content is bias-free and does not promote any product or idea. Correctness Validate the accuracy of the information stated against other reliable sources. Check if there are any disclaimers. Date the content was published or updated For topics that evolve continuously, you need to have updated information. Therefore, see the uploaded date, revised date, or updated date to identify if the source is the most recent one. For some topics, like those that are historical in nature, older resources can still be valid. Thoroughness Check if the website provides all the information you need. Verify that it covers the subject matter in detail. Examine if it provides examples. What are examples of credible sources? Many factors determine whether a given source is credible or not. If a source meets any of the following criteria, then it is considered credible. Well-known authors If an author of a source is well known in his or she is field, you can consider the source credible. You can trust the source. Databases Databases that store research articles can be considered credible, as they store scholarly articles. There are many such online databases. You can access them to get relevant information. A few examples of trustworthy online databases are listed below: PubMed JSTOR ERIC Scopus Government sites You will get authentic information from government websites. Websites ending with ".gov" and ".edu" are usually reliable sources. Some examples of credible websites are given below: Science.gov US Census Bureau The National Bureau of Economic Research Because so much information is now available online, it's importnt to know how to navigate digital sources versus print sources. Today, almost every print source has a digital edition (e.g., ebooks, online newspapers), and some academic journals only publish digitally. However, despite the many credible digital sources available today, there are still many unreliable sources available on the internet. Below are some suggestions for evaluating digital texts and a breakdown of the different types of sources available online. Example of just one fallacious quotation that can be found online. Search engine optimization (often abbreviated SEO) is a strategy used to increase unpaid views on a website from search engines. By using an algorithm, SEO works by locating keywords and sorting information for relevancy and accuracy. For example, if you were to search "How to change a flat tire" in a search engine, you would most likely get how-to videos and pages, rather than someone selling their car on Craigslist, because the algoritn sorts the webpages based on the keywords you input. Different search engines may utilize SEO differently, which also means that, depending on what search engine you use, you might have different results appear first. For example, companies that are owned by Google will most likely appear first when searching for something on Google. However, if you used a different search engine, such as Yahoo or Bing, your results may differ. Understanding SEO is important because it dictates the initial information you're presented with when using a search engine for your research. Differences in Domain Extensions Different websites have different domain extensions, that is, the final string of letters following the period on a website's domain name. Domain extensions help differentiate the type of websites and the different purposes they serve. Below is a breakdown of the most common domain extensions:.com—a commercial website .gov—a government owned/operated website .org—a website associated with an organization .edu—a website associated with an educational institution .net—a website used by network providers While there is no universal rule for whether a website's domain extension makes it credible, it's importnt to know that .com, .org, and .net domain extensions can be purchased and used by anyone. However, the .edu domain extension is reserved only for educational institutions, and the .gov domain extension is only used by governmental institutions. Determining a website's credibility can be especially confusing for websites with a .org extension that appear to have a governmental or educational affiliation. For example, the website passportUSA.org appears to contain official instructions for applying for a passport online; however, it is simply a PDF editing site. Because of the .org domain extension, it appears more credible. On the other hand, some well-known organizations use a .com domain extension, despite the fact that they're large organizations. It's importnt to not necessarily evaluate an online source simply based on its domain extension. As you navigate through different sources, you need to examine the authors and the website's other credentials before making assumptions simply by the domain extension. Wikipedia Wikipedia is a free online encyclopedia, created by the Wikimedia Foundation. Like other encyclopedias, Wikipedia can provide valuable information about certain topics. However, unlike encyclopedias, Wikipedia pages can be edited by anyone, which means that sometimes the information stated is not reliable and is edited for the sake of making a joke (see example below). An example of a Wikipedia page that has been vandalized to include a joking reference to the film Fight Club. Though this sort of vandalism is rare, it is not unheard of. In fact, even Wikipedia itself encourages its users to take caution when gathering information from its site. It states: "Users should be aware that not all articles are of encyclopedic quality from the start. Indeed, many articles start out by giving one—perhaps not particularly evenhanded—view of the subject, and it is after a long process of discussion, debate, and argument that they gradually take on a consensus form. Others may become caught up in a heavily unbalanced viewpoint and can take some time—months perhaps—to regain a better-balanced consensus" (see "Researching with Wikipedia"). While it's not encouraged to use Wikipedia as one of your main sources, Wikipedia can be used as a jumping-off point for other sources. At the bottom of most Wikipedia pages, you can find a list of sources that will take you to other pages (see image below). An example of a References section from a Wikipedia article that has been carefullyClickbait Clickbait is a type of sensationalized advertisement that seeks to attract viewers through catchy or seemingly unbelievable headlines. Most sites that use clickbait use it to simply gain "clicks" on their site. When looking for sources online, it's important to recognize which article titles sound like clickbait. Most clickbait articles want to shock the reader, so be aware of words like surprising, alarming, and shocking titles. Another form of clickbait is a page that challenges the viewer to a quiz or test. These will entice the reader by stating that the reader probably cannotanswer each question correctly. Understanding which articles are clickbait helps you evaluate your sources for credibility. Because clickbait sources exist simply to promote webpages, they are not considered credible sources. Social Media Social media is simply defined as any type of digital space that allows users to create content and share it with others in a social setting. A few of the most common social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, and Instagram. While social media is not regularly used as a source in research, sometimes you might use a YouTube video or a tweet from a well-known individual. When evaluating social media sites, it's important to know more about a user beyond their username. For example, if you were interested in examining how scientists use Twitter as a platform, you might find yourself quoting a tweet by Bill Nye or the physicist Brian Cox. Both of these individuals have blue checks next to their Twitter handles, which means the accounts are verified. However, you might not want to quote a tweet by someone with an anonymous name and a Twitter handle such as @iluvscience321. Similarly, YouTube videos can either be posted by a large organization or a single user. If you are interested in using a YouTube video in your research, look at whether the publisher is a larger organization (such as TED or National Geographic) or a single user that only publishes under a username. While not all large organizations produce unbiased information, more well-known organizations will most likely provide more credible information. In general, while you will probably not use a lot of social media in your research, if you do, try to locate the people or groups behind the usernames. After you identify the person or organization, you can find out more about them and determine their credibility. Personal Websites Many people have personal websites, such as blogs, that are not associated with a larger group or organization. Blogs can range in subject, from seasonal fashion tips to discussing every one of Emily Dickinson's poems. When evaluating a personal website, find out what you can about the author and their affiliations. Some personal websites exist solely to spread propaganda or other biased information. Podcasts Podcasts are becoming a much more popular digital medium today. Podcasts are essentially audio files that can be streamed on a computer or mobile device, like portable radio. They are usually part of a series or follow a theme. Like YouTube videos, podcasts can be valuable resources if used correctly. While almost anyone can produce a podcast, and topics range from discussing tv shows or books like The Bachelor and Harry Potter, other podcasts give in-depth information about science, history, anthropology, and a wide variety of other topics. For example, podcasts like Stuff You Missed in History Class and Historium Unearthia provide information on often-overlooked historical events. Like most sources, you should try to find out information about the author and cross-check the information in the podcast to see if you can find it elsewhere. Because anyone can produce a podcast, be aware that biased podcasts exist, and some might be used as propaganda. Online News Articles It's possible to find many news articles online, both from digital newspapers and websites that post news articles. When examining online news articles, find out what you can about the organization behind the articles. Different news outlets may have different agendas attached to their reporting. For example, some websites are known for being more left-wing or right-wing. Online Databases Often, the most reliable information you will find on the internet will come from online databases. A database is a large collection of data, usually about one specific topic or idea. Some databases contain a broader field of information, while some are narrower. For example, Hoosier State Chronicles is a database that only houses Indiana newspapers, while JSTOR is a database that holds a wider variety of journals and books. When looking for online sources, using a database helps you find credible information. In order for a source to be included in a database, it usually must go through a screening process that requires individuals to verify the information in the text. Because of this cross-checking process, the articles you find in databases will usually be more reliable than sources you might find simply by looking for them using a search engine. Because so much information is now available online, it's important to know how to navigate digital sources versus print sources. Today, almost every print source has a digital edition (e.g., ebooks, online newspapers), and some academic journals only publish digitally. However, despite the many credible digital sources available today, there are still many unreliable sources available on the ernet. Below are some suggestions for evaluating digital texts and a breakdown of the different types of sources available online. Search Engine Optimization is a strategy used to increase unpaid views on a website from search engines. By using an algorithm, SEO works by locating keywords and sorting information for relevancy and accuracy. For example, if you were to search "How to change a flat tire" in a search engine, you would most likely get how-to videos and pages, rather than someone selling their car on Craigslist, because the algorithm sorts the webpages based on the keywords you input. Different search engines may utilize SEO differently, which also means that, depending on what search engine you use, you might have different results appear first.In differentiating types of websites, understanding their purposes becomes essential for evaluating credibility. Domain extensions like .com, .gov, and .org offer clues about the website's nature, but these do not guarantee credibility. For instance, .org domains can mimic governmental or educational sites, leading to confusion; however, organizations like National Geographic use .com despite being well-established entities. A critical approach is required when assessing websites based solely on their domain extensions, as authors and other credentials are vital in determining credibility. ###ARTICLEWhen exploring online news articles, it's crucial to research the organisation behind the content. Different news outlets may carry distinct agendas in their reporting, such as leaning left or right wing. Online databases are often more reliable sources of information, containing a collection of verified data on specific topics. Databases like Hoosier State Chronicles focus on Indiana newspapers and JSTOR encompasses a wider variety of journals and books. A screening process typically verifies the information in these databases, making articles more credible compared to search engine results. Investigate the author by checking if their name and credentials are listed and verify this through educational credits, publications in scholarly journals, or employment with research institutions. Also, examine the URL ending: .edu sites are likely educational institutions, .gov sites are government websites usually reliable for statistics and reports, and .org sites can be non-profit but may have political biases. When using online sources, rely on reputable sources and diverse news sources to find more accurate information. It's your responsibility as a researcher to ensure you're using trustworthy sources by evaluating them based on author credentials, purpose, objectivity, and content. Evaluating the credibility and reliability of online information requires careful consideration of several key factors, including accuracy, reliability, and currency. Credible source importance increases in our digital age ###ENDARTICLEFinding credible sources is essential in today's information-driven society, but it can be daunting due to the vast amount of online information. Here are some types of credible sources: Academic journals, scholarly publications, and reputable websites that offer reliable information on various topics. Government reports and data are also valuable sources of official information. ###ARTICLESEO strategy boosts unpaid website views by using algorithms to sort relevant information based on keywords. It sorts webpages according to the search input, like searching "How to change a flat tire" which will yield how-to videos and pages instead of a car seller's webpage. Different search engines may use SEO differently, so search results might vary depending on which engine is used. Understanding SEO is crucial because it determines what information you see when using a search engine for research. Domain extensions like .com, .org, and .net help differentiate websites. However, there is no universal rule to determine credibility from domain extension. Both .edu and .gov are reserved only for educational institutions and governmental institutions respectively. Determining website credibility can be confusing with .org extension, as seen in passportUSA.org which appears official but is actually a PDF editing site. Wikipedia is a free online encyclopedia created by the Wikimedia Foundation. It provides valuable information on certain topics, but pages can be edited by anyone, making some information unreliable. Wikipedia users should exercise caution when gathering information from the site and recognize that not all articles start as reliable sources. Clickbait advertisements aim to attract viewers through catchy headlines. Clickbait is often used to gain "clicks" without providing credible content. Recognizing clickbait article titles with words like surprising, alarming, or shocking helps you evaluate your sources for credibility. Clickbait sources exist only to promote webpages and are not considered credible. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, and Instagram create digital spaces for users to share content. When evaluating social media sites, it's essential to know more about the user beyond their username. A verified blue check next to a Twitter handle indicates a credible account. Similarly, a larger organization's publisher can provide unbiased information on YouTube videos. Personal websites like blogs can range in subject and are not associated with larger groups or organizations. Blogs can be evaluated by considering the person or group behind the website. After identifying them, you can find out more about their credibility and determine their reliability. When searching online, it's essential to understand how to find reliable information. This involves looking beyond just any website that claims to have information you're looking for and instead focusing on finding credible sources. Some personal websites exist solely to spread propaganda or biased information, so it's crucial to investigate the author and their affiliations before taking their words as fact. Podcasts are becoming increasingly popular digital mediums, offering valuable resources when used correctly. They can provide in-depth information on a wide range of topics, from science and history to anthropology and more. While anyone can produce a podcast, not all of them are created equal. It's essential to evaluate the author, the purpose of the podcast, and its scope before using it as a source. Online news articles can also be found in abundance, but it's vital to examine the organization behind the article to ensure you're getting reliable information. Different news outlets may have their own agendas attached to their reporting, so it's crucial to cross-check information with other credible sources. Databases are often the best place to find reliable information online. These collections of data can be about a specific topic or idea and usually require individuals to verify the information in order for it to be included. This screening process helps ensure that articles found in databases will typically be more trustworthy than those discovered through search engines alone. When searching for sources, using a database is often an effective way to find credible information. However, there are many factors that can make finding reliable sources overwhelming, such as the sheer volume of available data and the difficulty of distinguishing between credible and less so sources. Understanding how to evaluate digital sources versus print sources is also crucial. Not all digital sources are created equal, and some may be more reliable than others due to the information they contain or their intended purpose. It's essential to determine whether a source is worth looking at and then figure out what you will do with it in your paper. In addition to understanding how to navigate different types of sources, knowing about search engine optimization (SEO) can also be incredibly helpful when conducting research online. SEO works by locating keywords and sorting information for relevancy and accuracy. This can greatly impact the results you see when searching for specific terms or topics. Finally, it's also essential to understand the differences between various domain extensions that appear on websites. These extensions can provide clues about a website's credibility, although there is no universal rule for what makes a site trustworthy based solely on its domain extension. While researching online, it's essential to be cautious about the credibility of sources. A .org extension doesn't necessarily mean an affiliation with a governmental or educational institution. For instance, passportUSA.org appears legitimate but is actually a PDF editing site, leveraging its domain extension to seem more credible. On the other hand, prominent organizations like National Geographic and TED use .com extensions, yet they're well-known institutions. It's crucial not to judge a source solely based on its domain name. Instead, evaluate authors' credentials and the website's overall credibility before making assumptions. Wikipedia is not online encyclopedia that provides valuable information but can also be unreliable due to anyone being able to edit it. Vandalism is rare, but it has occurred in the past, as seen with a joke reference to Fight Club on one page. Wikipedia advises users to exercise caution when gathering information from its site, acknowledging that articles may not always be of high quality initially. They suggest taking time to discuss and debate before reaching a consensus. Although Wikipedia shouldn't be a primary source, it can serve as a starting point for further research. Most pages include references at the bottom that link to other credible sources. Clickbait is another concern in online research. It's characterized by sensationalized headlines aiming to attract viewers with seemingly unbelievable content. Recognize clickbait titles containing words like "surprising," "alarming," or "shocking." Clickbait articles often challenge readers to quizzes or tests, claiming they'll likely fail. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram can be used as sources in research. However, it's essential to understand more about the user behind the username. Look for verified accounts with blue checks next to their handles, indicating a confirmed identity. Be cautious when quoting tweets from anonymous users or those with unclear affiliations. Personal websites, such as blogs, are another type of online source. They can range from fashion tips to in-depth discussions on specific topics like Emily Dickinson's poems. When evaluating personal websites, find out what you can about the author and their affiliations. Some exist solely to spread biased information or propaganda. Podcasts have become increasingly popular digital media. Like YouTube videos, they offer valuable resources but require scrutiny. Anyone can produce a podcast, covering various topics from TV shows and books to science, history, and anthropology. Be aware that biased podcasts do exist and may be used as propaganda. Online news articles can provide credible information if the organization behind them is reputable. Different outlets may have varying agendas attached to their reporting. For example, some websites are known for leaning left or right. Lastly, online databases often contain reliable information. These collections of data usually focus on specific topics or ideas and can be verified through cross-checking with other sources. A database like Hoosier State Chronicles houses Indiana newspapers, while JSTOR contains a broader range of academic articles.Using various academic journals and publications can help ensure that your research is based on credible information. When searching online for sources, utilizing a database is crucial to finding trustworthy content. In order to be included in these databases, published materials typically undergo a rigorous screening process which demands individuals to independently verify the details presented within the text. This thorough verification procedure results in articles found in databases being generally more reliable compared to those discovered solely through a standard search engine.

## Accuracy

The online world is flooded with information, but not all of it can be trusted. With anyone able to create their own website, much of the data available hasn't been vetted like academic journals. Most internet researchers don't get reviewed or fact-checked to ensure accuracy and truthfulness. It's up to users to decide if info is credible. To check a website's credibility, use the ABCs: Accuracy, Authority, Bias, Coverage, Currency. For accuracy, look for sources cited by authors, see if they're reliable, and check if editors or reviewers fact-checked the info. Poor writing might indicate poor research. Authority checks involve seeing if the author's credentials are shown, if they're part of a respected organization, who oversees the site, its purpose, and domain (like .edu or .gov). Personal blogs need closer review. Bias evaluation involves checking if info is opinion-based, has a political or religious motive, contains ads separate from content, and excludes relevant information. Coverage should be comprehensive, not missing details, and not require payment for access. Currency checks involve seeing when the info was published, if it's been kept up-to-date, and how current it needs to be for your research. Additional tips include looking for expert authors or publishers (like NY Times), citing sources, having up-to-date info, unbiased analysis, and comprehensive coverage. For more help with credibility evaluation, use the SIFT method: Stop, Investigate, Find, and Trace claims back to their source. This methodology was created by research scientist Mike Caulfield. To evaluate the credibility of information online, consider sites associated with trusted institutions that have a proven track record of accuracy and integrity. Look for websites specializing in specific types of information, such as medical websites or those run by government agencies. Be wary of sites trying to sell something, as their information may be biased. Steer clear of sites with a political ax to grind and instead opt for non-partisan ones. If a website seems old or poorly designed, it's likely created by amateurs. Sloppy writing is also a bad sign, but don't rely solely on design – check if the author has a byline, as this often indicates reliability. Reputable websites link to each other; try conducting a link-specific Google search to see which sites link back. In today's digital landscape, knowing how to navigate digital sources versus print sources is crucial. Digital sources include ebooks and online newspapers, while some academic journals only publish digitally. However, many unreliable sources are available online. Search engine optimization (SEO) can increase unpaid views on a website from search engines. By using an algorithm that sorts information for relevancy and accuracy, SEO works by locating keywords. Understanding how search engines use SEO is important, as it dictates the initial information presented when searching. Differences in domain extensions help differentiate websites and their purposes. Common domain extensions include .com (commercial), .gov (government), .org (organization), .edu (education), and .net (network). While a website's domain extension doesn't guarantee credibility, knowing this can help you evaluate its reliability. For example, passportUSA.org may appear to contain official instructions but is actually just a PDF editing site. Similarly, National Geographic uses .com despite being a large organization. Don't rely solely on the domain extension – examine authors and other credentials before making assumptions. Wikipedia is a valuable online resource, providing information about certain topics. However, its pages can be edited by anyone, leading to sometimes unreliable information. Users should exercise caution when gathering information from Wikipedia, as not all articles are of encyclopedic quality at first. Look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting tomorrow and discuss our strategies in detail. While it's not encouraged to use Wikipedia as one of your main sources, Wikipedia can be used as a jumping-off point for other sources. At the bottom of most Wikipedia pages, you can find a list of sources that will take you to other pages. An example of a References section from a Wikipedia article that has been carefully sourced. Clickbait Clickbait is a type of sensationalized advertisement that seeks to attract viewers through catchy or seemingly unbelievable headlines. Most sites that use clickbait use it to simply gain "clicks" on their site. When looking for sources online, it's important to recognize which article titles sound like clickbait. Most clickbait articles want to shock the reader, so be aware of words like surprising, alarming, and shocking titles. Another form of clickbait is a page that challenges the viewer to a quiz or test. These will entice the reader by stating that the reader probably cannotanswer each question correctly. An example of a sensationalistic clickbait headline. Understanding which articles are clickbait helps you evaluate your sources for credibility. Because clickbait sources exist simply to promote webpages, they are not considered credible sources. Social Media Social media is simply defined as any type of digital space that allows users to create content and share it with others in a social setting. A few of the most common social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, and Instagram. While social media is not regularly used as a source in research, sometimes you might use a YouTube video or a tweet from a well-known individual. When evaluating social media sites, it's important to know more about a user beyond their username. For example, if you were interested in examining how scientists use Twitter as a platform, you might find yourself quoting a tweet by Bill Nye or the physicist Brian Cox. Both of these individuals have blue checks next to their Twitter handles, which means the accounts are verified. However, you might not want to quote a tweet by someone with an anonymous name and a Twitter handle such as @iluvscience321. Similarly, YouTube videos can either be posted by a large organization or a single user. If you are interested in using a YouTube video in your research, look at whether the publisher is a larger organization (such as TED or National Geographic) or a single user that only publishes under a username. While not all large organizations produce unbiased information, more well-known organizations will most likely provide more credible information. In general, while you will probably not use a lot of social media in your research, if you do, try to locate the people or groups behind the usernames. After you identify the person or organization, you can find out more about them and determine their credibility. Personal Websites Many people have personal websites, such as blogs, that are not associated with a larger group or organization. Blogs can range in subject, from seasonal fashion tips to discussing every one of Emily Dickinson's poems. When evaluating a personal website, find out what you can about the author and their affiliations. Some personal websites exist solely to spread propaganda or other biased information. Podcasts Podcasts are becoming a much more popular digital medium today. Podcasts are essentially audio files that can be streamed on a computer or mobile device, like portable radio. They are usually part of a series or follow a theme. Like YouTube videos, podcasts can be valuable resources if used correctly. While almost anyone can produce a podcast, and topics range from discussing tv shows or books like The Bachelor and Harry Potter, other podcasts give in-depth information about science, history, anthropology, and a wide variety of other topics. For example, podcasts like Stuff You Missed in History Class and Historium Unearthia provide information on often-overlooked historical events. Like most sources, you should try to find out information about the author and cross-check the information in the podcast to see if you can find it elsewhere. Because anyone can produce a podcast, be aware that biased podcasts exist, and some might be used as propaganda. Online News Articles It's possible to find many news articles online, both from digital newspapers and websites that post news articles. When examining online news articles, find out what you can about the organization behind the articles. Different news outlets may have different agendas attached to their reporting. For example, some websites are known for being more left-wing or right-wing. Online Databases Often, the most reliable information you will find on the internet will come from online databases. A database is a large collection of data, usually about one specific topic or idea.A checklist for validating academic information can provide a structured approach to ensure research is grounded in facts and evidence. The first step is to identify who provided the information, as this often hinges on the expertise and reputation of its provider. Author credentials should be checked, including their academic and professional background, institutional affiliation, and peer review status. ###ARTICLECiting Sources with Confidence: How to Tell If a Website Is Credible Many online sources are big red flags. Conclusion You learned: How to ask questions about a source in order to determine credibility How do I know if a website source is credible? Many factors determine whether a given website source is credible or not. A few key features that you need to consider are given below: Origin of the website Check if the website is created by a trustworthy organization or author. You can identify the author from the URL or from the copyright information. Check if the author is related to the topic or field that he or she is talking about. Check if the content is bias-free and does not promote any product or idea. Correctness Validate the accuracy of the information stated against other reliable sources. Check if there are any disclaimers. Date the content was published or updated For topics that evolve continuously, you need to have updated information. Therefore, see the uploaded date, revised date, or updated date to identify if the source is the most recent one. For some topics, like those that are historical in nature, older resources can still be valid. Thoroughness Check if the website provides all the information you need. Verify that it covers the subject matter in detail. Examine if it provides examples. What are examples of credible sources? Many factors determine whether a given source is credible or not. If a source meets any of the following criteria, then it is considered credible. Well-known authors If an author of a source is well known in his or she is field, you can consider the source credible. You can trust the source. Databases Databases that store research articles can be considered credible, as they store scholarly articles. There are many such online databases. You can access them to get relevant information. A few examples of trustworthy online databases are listed below: PubMed JSTOR ERIC Scopus Government sites You will get authentic information from government websites. Websites ending with ".gov" and ".edu" are usually reliable sources. Some examples of credible websites are given below: Science.gov US Census Bureau The National Bureau of Economic Research Because so much information is now available online, it's importnt to know how to navigate digital sources versus print sources. Today, almost every print source has a digital edition (e.g., ebooks, online newspapers), and some academic journals only publish digitally. However, despite the many credible digital sources available today, there are still many unreliable sources available on the internet. Below are some suggestions for evaluating digital texts and a breakdown of the different types of sources available online. Search engine optimization (often abbreviated SEO) is a strategy used to increase unpaid views on a website from search engines. By using an algorithm, SEO works by locating keywords and sorting information for relevancy and accuracy. For example, if you were to search "How to change a flat tire" in a search engine, you would most likely get how-to videos and pages, rather than someone selling their car on Craigslist, because the algoritn sorts the webpages based on the keywords you input. Different search engines may utilize SEO differently, which also means that, depending on what search engine you use, you might have different results appear first. For example, companies that are owned by Google will most likely appear first when searching for something on Google. However, if you used a different search engine, such as Yahoo or Bing, your results may differ. Understanding SEO is important because it dictates the initial information you're presented with when using a search engine for your research. Differences in Domain Extensions Different websites have different domain extensions, that is, the final string of letters following the period on a website's domain name. Domain extensions help differentiate the type of websites and the different purposes they serve. Below is a breakdown of the most common domain extensions:.com—a commercial website .gov—a government owned/operated website .org—a website associated with an organization .edu—a website associated with an educational institution .net—a website used by network providers While there is no universal rule for whether a website's domain extension makes it credible, it's importnt to know that .com, .org, and .net domain extensions can be purchased and used by anyone. However, the .edu domain extension is reserved only for educational institutions, and the .gov domain extension is only used by governmental institutions. Determining a website's credibility can be especially confusing for websites with a .org extension that appear to have a governmental or educational affiliation. For example, the website passportUSA.org appears to contain official instructions for applying for a passport online; however, it is simply a PDF editing site. Because of the .org domain extension, it appears more credible. On the other hand, some well-known organizations use a .com domain extension, despite the fact that they're large organizations. It's importnt to not necessarily evaluate an online source simply based on its domain extension. As you navigate through different sources, you need to examine the authors and the website's other credentials before making assumptions simply by the domain extension. Wikipedia Wikipedia is a free online encyclopedia, created by the Wikimedia Foundation. Like other encyclopedias, Wikipedia can provide valuable information about certain topics. However, unlike encyclopedias, Wikipedia pages can be edited by anyone, which means that sometimes the information stated is not reliable and is edited for the sake of making a joke (see example below). An example of a Wikipedia page that has been vandalized to include a joking reference to the film Fight Club. Though this sort of vandalism is rare, it is not unheard of. In fact, even Wikipedia itself encourages its users to take caution when gathering information from its site. It states: "Users should be aware that not all articles are of encyclopedic quality from the start. Indeed, many articles start out by giving one—perhaps not particularly evenhanded—view of the subject, and it is after a long process of discussion, debate, and argument that they gradually take on a consensus form. Others may become caught up in a heavily unbalanced viewpoint and can take some time—months perhaps—to regain a better-balanced consensus" (see "Researching with Wikipedia"). While it's not encouraged to use Wikipedia as one of your main sources, Wikipedia can be used as a jumping-off point for other sources. At the bottom of most Wikipedia pages, you can find a list of sources that will take you to other pages (see image below). An example of a References section from a Wikipedia article that has been carefullyClickbait Clickbait is a type of sensationalized advertisement that seeks to attract viewers through catchy or seemingly unbelievable headlines. Most sites that use clickbait use it to simply gain "clicks" on their site. When looking for sources online, it's important to recognize which article titles sound like clickbait. Most clickbait articles want to shock the reader, so be aware of words like surprising, alarming, and shocking titles. Another form of clickbait is a page that challenges the viewer to a quiz or test. These will entice the reader by stating that the reader probably cannotanswer each question correctly. Understanding which articles are clickbait helps you evaluate your sources for credibility. Because clickbait sources exist simply to promote webpages, they are not considered credible sources. Social Media Social media is simply defined as any type of digital space that allows users to create content and share it with others in a social setting. A few of the most common social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, and Instagram. While social media is not regularly used as a source in research, sometimes you might use a YouTube video or a tweet from a well-known individual. When evaluating social media sites, it's important to know more about a user beyond their username. For example, if you were interested in examining how scientists use Twitter as a platform, you might find yourself quoting a tweet by Bill Nye or the physicist Brian Cox. Both of these individuals have blue checks next to their Twitter handles, which means the accounts are verified. However, you might not want to quote a tweet by someone with an anonymous name and a Twitter handle such as @iluvscience321. Similarly, YouTube videos can either be posted by a large organization or a single user. If you are interested in using a YouTube video in your research, look at whether the publisher is a larger organization (such as TED or National Geographic) or a single user that only publishes under a username. While not all large organizations produce unbiased information, more well-known organizations will most likely provide more credible information. In general, while you will probably not use a lot of social media in your research, if you do, try to locate the people or groups behind the usernames. After you identify the person or organization, you can find out more about them and determine their credibility. Personal Websites Many people have personal websites, such as blogs, that are not associated with a larger group or organization. Blogs can range in subject, from seasonal fashion tips to discussing every one of Emily Dickinson's poems. When evaluating a personal website, find out what you can about the author and their affiliations. Some personal websites exist solely to spread propaganda or other biased information. Podcasts Podcasts are becoming a much more popular digital medium today. Podcasts are essentially audio files that can be streamed on a computer or mobile device, like portable radio. They are usually part of a series or follow a theme. Like YouTube videos, podcasts can be valuable resources if used correctly. While almost anyone can produce a podcast, and topics range from discussing tv shows or books like The Bachelor and Harry Potter, other podcasts give in-depth information about science, history, anthropology, and a wide variety of other topics. For example, podcasts like Stuff You Missed in History Class and Historium Unearthia provide information on often-overlooked historical events. Like most sources, you should try to find out information about the author and cross-check the information in the podcast to see if you can find it elsewhere. Because anyone can produce a podcast, be aware that biased podcasts exist, and some might be used as propaganda. Online News Articles It's possible to find many news articles online, both from digital newspapers and websites that post news articles. When examining online news articles, find out what you can about the organization behind the articles. Different news outlets may have different agendas attached to their reporting. For example, some websites are known for being more left-wing or right-wing. Online Databases Often, the most reliable information you will find on the internet will come from online databases. A database is a large collection of data, usually about one specific topic or idea. Some databases contain a broader field of information, while some are narrower. For example, Hoosier State Chronicles is a database that only houses Indiana newspapers, while JSTOR is a database that holds a wider variety of journals and books. When looking for online sources, using a database helps you find credible information. In order for a source to be included in a database, it usually must go through a screening process that requires individuals to verify the information in the text. Because of this cross-checking process, the articles you find in databases will usually be more reliable than sources you might find simply by looking for them using a search engine. Because so much information is now available online, it's important to know how to navigate digital sources versus print sources. Today, almost every print source has a digital edition (e.g., ebooks, online newspapers), and some academic journals only publish digitally. However, despite the many credible digital sources available today, there are still many unreliable sources available on the internet. Below are some suggestions for evaluating digital texts and a breakdown of the different types of sources available online. Search Engine Optimization is a strategy used to increase unpaid views on a website from search engines. By using an algorithm, SEO works by locating keywords and sorting information for relevancy and accuracy. For example, if you were to search "How to change a flat tire" in a search engine, you would most likely get how-to videos and pages, rather than someone selling their car on Craigslist, because the algorithm sorts the webpages based on the keywords you input. Different search engines may utilize SEO differently, which also means that, depending on what search engine you use, you might have different results appear first.In differentiating types of websites, understanding their purposes becomes essential for evaluating credibility. Domain extensions like .com, .gov, and .org offer clues about the website's nature, but these do not guarantee credibility. For instance, .org domains can mimic governmental or educational sites, leading to confusion; however, organizations like National Geographic use .com despite being well-established entities. A critical approach is required when assessing websites based solely on their domain extensions, as authors and other credentials are vital in determining credibility. ###ARTICLEWhen exploring online news articles, it's crucial to research the organisation behind the content. Different news outlets may carry distinct agendas in their reporting, such as leaning left or right wing. Online databases are often more reliable sources of information, containing a collection of verified data on specific topics. Databases like Hoosier State Chronicles focus on Indiana newspapers and JSTOR encompasses a wider variety of journals and books. A screening process typically verifies the information in these databases, making articles more credible compared to search engine results. Investigate the author by checking if their name and credentials are listed and verify this through educational credits, publications in scholarly journals, or employment with research institutions. Also, examine the URL ending: .edu sites are likely educational institutions, .gov sites are government websites usually reliable for statistics and reports, and .org sites can be non-profit but may have political biases. When using online sources, rely on reputable sources and diverse news sources to find more accurate information. It's your responsibility as a researcher to ensure you're using trustworthy sources by evaluating them based on author credentials, purpose, objectivity, and content. Evaluating the credibility and reliability of online information requires careful consideration of several key factors, including accuracy, reliability, and currency. Credible source importance increases in our digital age ###ENDARTICLEFinding credible sources is essential in today's information-driven society, but it can be daunting due to the vast amount of online information. Here are some types of credible sources: Academic journals, scholarly publications, and reputable websites that offer reliable information on various topics. Government reports and data are also valuable sources of official information. ###ARTICLESEO strategy boosts unpaid website views by using algorithms to sort relevant information based on keywords. It sorts webpages according to the search input, like searching "How to change a flat tire" which will yield how-to videos and pages instead of a car seller's webpage. Different search engines may use SEO differently, so search results might vary depending on which engine is used. Understanding SEO is crucial because it determines what information you see when using a search engine for research. Domain extensions like .com, .org, and .net help differentiate websites. However, there is no universal rule to determine credibility from domain extension. Both .edu and .gov are reserved only for educational institutions and governmental institutions respectively. Determining website credibility can be confusing with .org extension, as seen in passportUSA.org which appears official but is actually a PDF editing site. Wikipedia is a free online encyclopedia created by the Wikimedia Foundation. It provides valuable information on certain topics, but pages can be edited by anyone, making some information unreliable. Wikipedia users should exercise caution when gathering information from the site and recognize that not all articles start as reliable sources. Clickbait advertisements aim to attract viewers through catchy headlines. Clickbait is often used to gain "clicks" without providing credible content. Recognizing clickbait article titles with words like surprising, alarming, or shocking helps you evaluate your sources for credibility. Clickbait sources exist only to promote webpages and are not considered credible. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr, and Instagram create digital spaces for users to share content. When evaluating social media sites, it's essential to know more about the user beyond their username. A verified blue check next to a Twitter handle indicates a credible account. Similarly, a larger organization's publisher can provide unbiased information on YouTube videos. Personal websites like blogs can range in subject and are not associated with larger groups or organizations. Blogs can be evaluated by considering the person or group behind the website. After identifying them, you can find out more about their credibility and determine their reliability. When searching online, it's essential to understand how to find reliable information. This involves looking beyond just any website that claims to have information you're looking for and instead focusing on finding credible sources. Some personal websites exist solely to spread propaganda or biased information, so it's crucial to investigate the author and their affiliations before taking their words as fact. Podcasts are becoming increasingly popular digital mediums, offering valuable resources when used correctly. They can provide in-depth information on a wide range of topics, from science and history to anthropology and more. While anyone can produce a podcast, not all of them are created equal. It's essential to evaluate the author, the purpose of the podcast, and its scope before using it as a source. Online news articles can also be found in abundance, but it's vital to examine the organization behind the article to ensure you're getting reliable information. Different news outlets may have their own agendas attached to their reporting, so it's crucial to cross-check information with other credible sources. Databases are often the best place to find reliable information online. These collections of data can be about a specific topic or idea and usually require individuals to verify the information in order for it to be included. This screening process helps ensure that articles found in databases will typically be more trustworthy than those discovered through search engines alone. When searching for sources, using a database is often an effective way to find credible information. However, there are many factors that can make finding reliable sources overwhelming, such as the sheer volume of available data and the difficulty of distinguishing between credible and less so sources. Understanding how to evaluate digital sources versus print sources is also crucial. Not all digital sources are created equal, and some may be more reliable than others due to the information they contain or their intended purpose. It's essential to determine whether a source is worth looking at and then figure out what you will do with it in your paper. In addition to understanding how to navigate different types of sources, knowing about search engine optimization (SEO) can also be incredibly helpful when conducting research online. SEO works by locating keywords and sorting information for relevancy and accuracy. This can greatly impact the results you see when searching for specific terms or topics. Finally, it's also essential to understand the differences between various domain extensions that appear on websites. These extensions can provide clues about a website's credibility, although there is no universal rule for what makes a site trustworthy based solely on its domain extension. While researching online, it's essential to be cautious about the credibility of sources. A .org extension doesn't necessarily mean an affiliation with a governmental or educational institution. For instance, passportUSA.org appears legitimate but is actually a PDF editing site, leveraging its domain extension to seem more credible. On the other hand, prominent organizations like National Geographic and TED use .com extensions, yet they're well-known institutions. It's crucial not to judge a source solely based on its domain name. Instead, evaluate authors' credentials and the website's overall credibility before making assumptions. Wikipedia is not online encyclopedia that provides valuable information but can also be unreliable due to anyone being able to edit it. Vandalism is rare, but it has occurred in the past, as seen with a joke reference to Fight Club on one page. Wikipedia advises users to exercise caution when gathering information from its site, acknowledging that articles may not always be of high quality initially. They suggest taking time to discuss and debate before reaching a consensus. Although Wikipedia shouldn't be a primary source, it can serve as a starting point for further research. Most pages include references at the bottom that link to other credible sources. Clickbait is another concern in online research. It's characterized by sensationalized headlines aiming to attract viewers with seemingly unbelievable content. Recognize clickbait titles containing words like "surprising," "alarming," or "shocking." Clickbait articles often challenge readers to quizzes or tests, claiming they'll likely fail. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram can be used as sources in research. However, it's essential to understand more about the user behind the username. Look for verified accounts with blue checks next to their handles, indicating a confirmed identity. Be cautious when quoting tweets from anonymous users or those with unclear affiliations. Personal