Web Resource Credibility Checklist

**Author/Source Background:**

- Does the author provide their credentials?
- What type of expertise does the author have on the subject they are writing about?
- Does the author provide their education and background?
- What type of experience does the author have?
- Should you trust this author’s knowledge of the subject?

Tips for researching the Author/Source background:

- Look for the “more about” or scroll to the bottom and read the credentials of the author
- Google the author’s name to find more about their affiliations and expertise
- Conduct a “who is” search to determine who owns the website: [http://www.whois.net](http://www.whois.net)

**Purpose:**

- Is the author or website attempting to sell or promote a product or specific idea?
- Does the author or website have a financial stake in the issue they are writing about?
- Does the author or website have connections to organizations that promote a specific point of view?

Tips:

- Look for advertisements, sponsorships, and links to other organizations and companies.
- Look for background information about the author and website
- Determine if the author has any investments or connections to the organizations and issues he/she is writing about
**Objectivity:**

- Is the information biased or presented with a particular “slant” towards a point of view?
- Is the content written towards trying to sway the audience to accept a particular point of view?
- Is this a primary source presenting new information or a secondary source trying to explain a research study or topic?
- Are there any conflicts of interest?

**Tips:**

- Separate opinions from facts:
  - Opinions are how an author “feels” about a fact, subject, event, or topic.
  - Facts are things that can be proven as true or false

**Accuracy:**

- Are sources listed for the facts presented by the author?
- Can information be verified through another source?
- Has the site been edited for grammar, spelling, etc.?
- Are the topics covered in depth?
- Does the content appear to be complete?

- For Primary Sources:
  - Is there at least one other secondary source from an expert?
  - That source may reveal any issues or lapses in how the study or research was conducted.

- For Secondary Sources:
  - Are the primary sources for the information cited or linked to?
  - View the primary source to ensure the information is accurately represented
  - Beware of cherry-picking and information taken out of context.

**Tips:**

- Cross-check sources by visiting more than one source and ensuring the information is correct and not taken out of context or re-published inaccurately.
**Timeliness:**

- Does the information I’m citing need to be timely? (history vs. current events/research)
- When was this information published?
- Has the information been updated?
- Are there other credible resources with more recent information?
- Is this information still relevant?

**Tips:**

- Look for the date the information was published
- Check another credible source to see if more timely information has been published

**Appearance:**

- Is the site easy to navigate?
- Are there any broken links to citations, other websites, and resources?
- Does the site load easily?
- Does your ad blocker or web safety software pick up any malware, adware, or other unwanted tracking programs?
- Is the site overwhelmed by advertisements?
- Are there a lot of spelling and grammatical errors?

**Tips:**

- View other sections of the website and look closely at the article to determine whether the appearance of the website raises any red flags

**Plagiarism:**

- Am I accurately quoting a source?
- If paraphrasing, am I using my own words or simply changing a few words from the original source?
- Have I included a list of all works that I have cited?
- Have I used a plagiarism checker (optional)?
- Am I submitting work that is original, and my own, and not the work of others?

**Tips:**

- When in doubt, run your work through a plagiarism checker.