

5 Tips for Identifying Credible Sources on the Internet:

Examine who is providing the information

Asking who is providing the information helps determine whether the information itself is credible.

Is it found on a site that is reputable? Is the site from an academic institution, a professional organization, or a government agency? The URLs for these sites will generally end in edu, org, or gov. Many .com sites are also reputable, but may require a closer look.

Determine the credibility of the source

Is the author identified? What are their credentials? Do they have the expertise to speak on the topic?

Credentials in one field do not make someone an expert in another field. Are all conflicts of interest disclosed? If content is sponsored, is this stated clearly? Are claims supported with verified, reputable references? Is enough information provided to look up the original source?

Beware of clever clickbait

Is the headline clever “clickbait,” or, an enticing statement of fact? Headlines should be honest as well as interesting. Be wary of fear-based messaging. Is correlation presented as causation? Are preliminary study findings presented as the final word? The old adage bears repeating: If something sounds too good (or too bad) to be true, it probably is. Don't fall for it.

Analyze the motive behind the message

Is the article or website designed to inform or is it designed to sell? Many sales pages appear as educational articles in disguise. If a motive to sell is present, is the product or service clearly represented and explained? Are the claims adequately supported or have findings been “cherry-picked” to only show one side that favors the product? Look for biases and analyze motives.

Expect clarity and context

Is the information presented so as to be easily understood by the target audience? Is context provided? Context provides examples and explanations that are meaningful and useful. A credible site uses plain language, supports all “facts,” discloses all viewpoints, and acknowledges all sources. A credible site earns your trust, a questionable one should produce skepticism.