

## Finding Quality Websites

With all the information on the web, how can you tell if a website is a reliable source for your research? The tips and tools below can help you locate valuable websites.

### What is the address of the site?

- Websites with addresses ending **.gov** or **.edu** usually have reliable information.
- These websites are helpful especially as you begin learning about a topic. These sites provide references for information used to write the page. Those sources are a good sign that the information is trustworthy.
- Look for websites that list their sources. Look for words like references or bibliography to find the author's source of information.



Compare these World Trade Organization sites:  
[www.gatt.org](http://www.gatt.org)  
and  
[www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)  
Which site would you choose for your research?

### Does the site heavily support one side of an argument?

- The main purpose of these sites is to change your point of view. The information presented is biased when one side of an argument is heavily promoted and the other side is dismissed or ignored.

- For instance, even the title of this website *Legalization of Marijuana* reveals bias. The authors want marijuana to be legal. It is highly unlikely this site will contain negative information about the use of marijuana. Most sites have some level of bias, some more than others. If you are working on an assignment that requires research based information, you would not want to use sites that are heavily biased.



- The problem with these types of sites is they tend to provide incomplete information or rely on opinion rather than fact to promote their ideas.

## Did someone review the author's work?

- Anyone can publish their ideas, opinions, and stories on websites, wikis (e.g. Wikipedia), and blogs, without an editor or publisher checking the information for accuracy. On the other hand most books, journal, and magazines have editors or subject experts to review information before it can be published.



- Check the sources the author used to write the information. Experts often cite information from books and academic journal articles rather than websites and popular magazines like *Time* or *Newsweek*.

### An Alternative to Wikipedia

Wikipedia, a free web encyclopedia often has information on your topic, but anyone can contribute to the entries. The MSU Library has high quality encyclopedias available online through the Library's website.

- 1) Start your research by clicking **Article Databases A-Z** from the Library homepage at [lib.mnsu.edu](http://lib.mnsu.edu)
- 2) Select **Britannica Online Academic Edition**

## Does the Information found in books and journal articles support the website?

- Compare the information you found on the questionable website with information in books and journal articles.
- If you cannot find other sources supporting the website's information, it is highly unlikely the website is reliable!

### Sources Listing Quality Websites

Having a difficult time finding a good website? Start by using these sites listing scholarly or reliable web sources:

- Google Scholar <http://scholar.google.com/>
- Internet Scout Report <http://scout.wisc.edu/>
- Librarian's Index to the Internet <http://lii.org/>

If these tips and tools do not help, ask your instructor or librarian for assistance!  
**Above all, if you have any doubts about the quality of the site, don't use it!**