Reliable and Unreliable Sources

Resource: “Internet Research Tips” by Grace Fleming

Whenever sources must be used for writing academic papers, such as research papers, reliable sources must be used to validate or support your ideas. Some sources are considered as reliable because they have been written by people who are experts in the field. On the other hand, some sources, such as Wikipedia, are not reliable because the authors may not have a thorough knowledge or full understanding of a topic.

Below are two lists of sources that are considered as reliable and unreliable:

List of **reliable** sources — print and online:

books — authored, edited and published
newspapers and magazines
peer reviewed journals
peer reviewed articles
PhD or MBA dissertations and research
Public library including *Questia*
scholarly articles
isolated studies or academic research
educational institutions and their websites

To determine reliability of **online sites and their organizations**, determine the URL’s (Uniform Resources Locator) ending:
-if the site ends in .edu, it is most likely an educational institution. Be aware, however, of political bias.

-if the site ends in .gov, it is most likely a reliable government website. These sites usually provide good sources for statistics and objective reports.

-if the site ends in .org, it is usually a non-profit organization.

-these sources vary in being good or poor sources of information

-need to research their possible agendas or political biases, if they exist

**Online journals and magazines:**

-reputable journals and magazines should contain a bibliography for every article

-lists sources within that bibliography that can be extensive and should include scholarly, non-Internet sources

-check the statistics and data within the article validate the claims made by the author to verify the evidence that is claimed in the statements

**News sources:**

-every television and print news source has a website

-are reliable, but sometimes focus is to entertain rather than inform

-think of these sources as a steppingstone to more reliable sources

**List of unreliable sources — print and online:**

The following are unreliable sources because they require confirmation with a reliable source:

Wikipedia, although site is a good starting point for finding initial ideas about a topic; however, some of their information and attached resources may not be reliable

Blogs, tweets

Personal websites
Forums

Questionable sites created by organizations that may have political or biased agendas

Sites that provide biased information

Self-published sources

Opinionated articles such as editorials

Online sources with an URL (Uniform Resources Locator) that ends in html (HyperText Markup Language), which is the basic building blocks of webpages

Some online sources with an URL (Uniform Resources Locator) that ends in .com: sites of companies that conduct their business over the internet. Some of these sites are unreliable because they have hidden agendas.