

Is the WWW Reliable?

With the number of web pages approaching a billion at the turn of the century, and the access that any lay person has to the the WWW, you can't trust everything you see. Looks can be very deceiving! Just because information is on the web, and looks very professional, doesn't mean it's reliable, accurate, or useful. It takes millions of dollars to publish a magazine to a million readers. This money comes from investors who will hold the writers accountable. Anyone with \$20 in their pocket can publish a web page to half a billion people. Anyone like kids taking this course!

So What Can you do to protect yourself?

You really should be looking for the following things when you are considering whether to trust a website or not.

1) Is this a reputable company or organization?

- Have you heard of them before?
- Have you seen their product on sale before?

2) Does the website look professional? Look at:

- Color Scheme
- Clear Crisp Images
- No Spelling Mistakes
- Nice Clean Layout

But you can't stop here! Look at the examples below to see why...

DHMO.org

[Save The Tree Octopus](http://SaveTheTreeOctopus.com)

Just remember, looks can be deceiving!

3) What is the history of the website?

Use the [The Wayback Machine](http://TheWaybackMachine.com) to check the historical development of the site:

- How long has the website been posted?
- What did the page look like through it's development?
- Is there any cause for concern in their history?

4) Who owns the website?

- Site ownership can reveal some interesting facts.
- Check who owns a site by doing a whois search Whois.net

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5) Do they have a legal section or privacy policy?

If they do, check out what it says.

- Even if all of these things seem safe, sometimes misdirection is possible. You should always be careful about who you trust on the Internet.

6) One final thing you can do is called "Triangulation"

- This is just a fancy way of saying find at least 3 sources that confirm the information is reliable. For example, if you find a product on a website for \$2 and every other site you can find is selling it for \$40, you may want to think twice about ordering from the \$2 site.
- This also applies to information that you are gathering. If a website says that chewing gum causes cancer, but you can't find any other site that confirms this, you may not want to use this information in your science project.