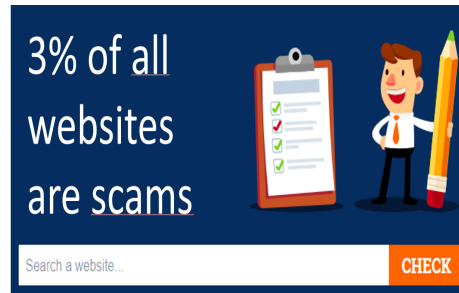# Eight Ways to Determine Website Reliability

by [Tony Rogers](#)
Updated June 30, 2017

The Internet can be a wonderful reporting tool for journalists. Data that once was only found in paper documents can now often be accessed with the click of a mouse, and research that once took hours or days can be done in minutes.

But for every reputable website, there are dozens chock full of information that's inaccurate, unreliable or just plain nutty. For the unwary, inexperienced ?journalist, such sites can present a minefield of possible problems.

With that in mind, here are eight ways to tell if a website is reliable.

1. Look for Sites from Established Institutions

- The internet is full of websites that started five minutes ago. What you want are sites associated with trusted institutions that have been around for awhile and have a proven track record of reliability and integrity.

- Such sites may include those run by government agencies, non-profit organizations, foundations or colleges and universities.

2. Look for Sites With Expertise

- You wouldn't go to an auto mechanic if you broke your leg, and you wouldn't go to the hospital to have your car repaired. I'm making an obvious point: Look for websites that specialize in the kind of information you're seeking. So if you're writing a story on a flu outbreak, check out medical websites, such as the Centers for Disease Control, and so on.

3. Steer Clear of Commercial Sites

- Sites run by companies and business - their websites usually end in .com - are more often than not trying to sell you something.

- And if they're trying to sell you something, chances are whatever information they're presenting will be tilted in favor of their product. That's not to say corporate sites should be excluded entirely. But be wary.

4. Beware Bias

- Reporters write a lot about politics, and there are plenty of political websites out there

- But many of them are run by groups that have a bias in favor of one political party or philosophy. A conservative website isn't likely to report objectively on a liberal politician, and vice versa. Steer clear of sites with a political ax to grind and instead look for ones that are non-partisan.

5. Check the Date

- As a reporter you need for the most up-to-date information available, so if a website seems old, it's probably best to steer clear. One way to check - look for a "last updated" date on the page or site.

6. Look at the Site's Look

- If a site looks poorly designed and amateurish, chances are it was created by amateurs. Steer clear. But be careful - just because a website is professionally designed doesn't mean it's reliable.

7. Avoid Anonymous Authors

- Articles or studies whose authors are named are often - though not always - more reliable than works produced anonymously. It makes sense: If someone is willing to put their name on something they've written, chances are they stand by the information it contains. And if you have the name of the author, you can always Google them to check their credentials.

8. Check the Links

- Reputable websites often link to each other. See which sites the website you're on links to.

- Then go to Google and enter this in the search field: link: http://www.yourwebsite.com

- This will show you which sites link to the one you're on. If lots of sites are linking to your site, and of those sites seem reputable, then that's a good sign.