



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#233 - March 2025

## A Best Practice: Evaluating Websites (Part II)

In any conversation about technology in adult faith formation, one of the questions that will immediately surface is the necessity of determining the authenticity and trustworthiness of information on the internet.

There are many organizations, particularly schools and universities, that have shared guidelines and suggestions for evaluating websites. Last month's issue (February 2025) looked at some of them.

### The challenge

Excellent as all these resources are, they do not specifically evaluate the catholicity of the site. Therefore, we can do a couple of things:

- Use the criteria that is shared and apply it to Catholic sites.
- Look specifically at some criteria that would apply to determining the authenticity of Catholic sites.

Several years ago, the adult faith formation committee of NCCL adapted many of the criteria, applying it specifically to Catholic sites. (It is not currently posted on the new NCCL website; but can be found below.)

### Introduction

Knowing how to evaluate a website is one of the most vexing problems in using the World Wide Web for adult faith formation.

The following list of evaluation criteria is adapted from *Elementary CC's for Evaluating Internet Sites* which was adapted by Maggie Roche (teacher-librarian), with permission from Betsy Richmond from May Gibbs Memorial Library; Neutral Bay Public School.

(The original *Elementary CC's for Evaluating Internet Sites* is longer available on the web).

## 25 CC's for Evaluating Religion Internet Sites

1. Credibility:
  - Who is the author?
  - Is there information about the author?
  - Can you find it? Is the author a current Catholic?
2. Credentials:
  - What qualifications does the author have in this subject?
  - If this is theological material, is the author in good standing with the Church?
3. Contact & Communication:
  - Can the author or web master be contacted with comments or questions?
4. Clues:
  - Where is the web site located?
  - Does the domain name end in .com, .gov, .edu, etc.?
  - Did a Church organization publish these pages or only an individual?
5. Commendation:
  - Has the site been recommended or reviewed by a reliable source, such as a bishop or Church organization?
6. Content:
  - What is the purpose of the information on the site?
  - Is it genuine and trustworthy, or is it opinion and bias?
7. Catholic:
  - Is this Catholic content and does this information reflect an ecumenical understanding of religious tradition and teaching?

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8. Coverage:
  - What is the scope?
  - Is the topic covered in depth: Is it full and comprehensive or is it trivial?
9. Copyright:
  - What is the copyright?
  - Is this material current or dated?
10. Comprehension:
  - At what level is the material?
  - Is it too complicated or too long?
11. Critical Thinking:
  - Can you treat this material the same way you would treat a published book?
  - Does it drift from the main topic?
12. Citation:
  - Does the author give credit for cited work?
  - Is this "public domain" or is it protected by copyright?
13. Currency:
  - Has the information been updated recently?
  - Is there a date for "last updated?"
14. Continuity:
  - Will the site continue to be updated?
  - Can you rely on the site over time?
15. Connectivity:
  - Does access to the site require special software?
  - If it is popular, will it be accessible in the time you have?
16. Clarity:
  - Is the design appealing, with elegant simplicity, or is it fussy, crowded, or complicated?
  - Does too many fancy or large graphics make it slow to load?
17. Context:
  - No matter how deep you go into the site can you return to the home page to determine the source?
  - Has the author shown where all of the information came from?
18. Cruise Control:
  - Is there a site map, table of contents, or outline of topics?
  - Is there a search function in a large site?
19. Completeness:
  - Is there a comparable source either online or in the real world?
  - Is the internet version complete?
20. Correctness:
  - Are the facts correct?
  - Web sites can contain unchecked information. Does the site provide guidance?
21. COPPA: (Child Online Privacy Protection Act).
  - If the site is intended for a child, is the author asking a child under age 13 to reveal personal information without parental permission?
22. Quality Control:
  - Has the site been proofread, checked, edited?
23. Compassion:
  - Are people treated with fairness and tolerance?
  - Or do you see bias, stereotyping, loaded language, racism, or other hurtful ideas?
24. Care & Caution:
  - Do you remember to keep an eye open in case something is not appropriate for you?
25. Comparability:
  - How does this online information fit into your subject and search? Does the Internet fill a gap or would it be easier to use another source?

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A few (of the many other) sites that provide information about evaluating websites:

- Media Bias/Fact Check - <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/>
- Web Evaluation Guide by UC Berkeley - <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/research101/evaluate>
- Cornell University's Critically Analyzing Information Sources - [https://guides.library.cornell.edu/critically\\_analyzing/home](https://guides.library.cornell.edu/critically_analyzing/home)
- Stanford Web Credibility - <https://credibility.stanford.edu/guidelines/index.html>
- How to Tell if a Website is Credible - <https://www.easybib.com/guides/citation-guides/citation-basics/how-to-tell-if-website-is-credible/>
- Evaluating Digital Sources - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/conducting\\_research/evaluating\\_sources\\_of\\_information/evaluating\\_digital\\_sources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/evaluating_sources_of_information/evaluating_digital_sources.html)
- How to tell if a website is credible - <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/edge/learning-center/how-to-tell-if-a-site-is-credible?form=MA13I2>
- Evaluating Web Sources - <https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/evaluating-web-sources-0>
- Evaluating Web Resources: What Makes a Credible Website? - <https://libguides.berry.edu/evaluatingweb>
- 30 Factors That Influence Website Credibility - <https://www.websitebuilderexpert.com/designing-websites/website-credibility/>



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at [www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish* - <https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *Guided by the Directory for Catechesis: Transforming the Vision and Practice of Parish Catechesis* - <https://twentythirdpublications.com/products/guided-by-the-directory-for-catechesis>
- Lifelong Faith Training: <https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/>
- Lifelong Faith: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/>
- Seasons of Adult Faith website: <http://adultfaith.weebly.com/>
- The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation: [https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons\\_of\\_aff\\_-\\_journal\\_special\\_issue.pdf](https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons_of_aff_-_journal_special_issue.pdf)