

# VERIFYING ONLINE INFORMATION

Online information can help you stay informed about current events and can help you locate information you need to make decisions. It is important to remember that some online information is not checked for quality or accuracy. Use this checklist to evaluate online sources. Before sharing any personal information or exchanging money, be sure to share the information with a parent or another trusted adult.

## WHO: Who is the author or publisher?

- Does the page list the author and their credentials or qualifications to write about the topic?
- Have you heard of the author?
- Is their contact information or organization listed?
- Is the author trying to make money by selling or promoting a product?



## WHAT: What are you being told?

- Are you being sold something? Does it seem too good to be true? If so, be cautious.
- Are you being asked to donate money? If so, be cautious.
- Are there typos or spelling errors that could mean poor quality control?
- Does the language or tone of the message seem biased or exaggerated?
- Is the information based on scientific evidence? (Are there citations for published research to back up the information?)
- Do other sources back up the information? Remember that one person's experience may not apply to everyone. A testimonial is not the same as published research.



## WHEN: Is the information current?

- When was the information written or last updated?
- Are there links that no longer work?



## WHERE: Where is the information published and based?

- Does the domain name/URL contain typos?
- What is the ending of the web address? This can help you learn what the author's intentions might be. A web address that ends in
  - ".edu" is published by an educational institution.
  - ".gov" belongs to a governmental organization.
  - ".org" belongs to a nonprofit.
  - ".com" belongs to a for-profit company.



## WHY: Is the information relevant?

- Could another source be used to find better information?

