FIRST TERM RESOURCE: RESEARCH ON THE WEB

The Internet is a helpful resource when conducting research. However, you should carefully examine Internet sources before using them for research in your paper. Below are some helpful tips to consider when researching online.

Does the site look professional?
If not, it’s probably not a good site to use for research.

Does the site have an author—either an individual or an organization—that you can trust?
If not, you’ll probably want to avoid the information on the site. You’ll only want to use information for your assignments from credible resources that have valid information written by someone with experience and/or expertise on the topic or in the subject matter or professional field.

Is the site a Wiki?
Be careful using wikis. Wikis are written by and edited by anyone, so the information may not be accurate. If you use a Wiki, verify the information by checking multiple other sources.

Is it a blog?
Blogs are fun to read (and write!), but personal blogs often provide unique perspectives on issues, which may not be representative enough to use as an example or evidence to prove a point. Also the information may not have been fact-checked before being published. Always ask your instructor before using information from a blog in an assignment.

Are there lots of popups on the site?
If so, the site might be an enticement to click on those popups rather than a place to get information for an academic paper.

Is the site a politically “slanted” or activist site?
The use of these sites is acceptable *if* you balance this information with objective data. Some reliable sites include the following:

- News agencies (CNN.com, PBS.org, AP.org, NYtimes.com, etc.)
- Information portal homepages (MSN.com, Yahoo.com)
- Government sites (city, local, and national)
- Education sites from various universities and colleges (ending in .edu)

The Purdue University Global Online Library is one of the best places to obtain timely and relevant academic research.