USING THE INTERNET FOR RESEARCH

Some students are anxious about using the Internet for their research, while others use only websites because they are easy to search. The better approach is somewhere in the middle. The Internet is just another means of communicating information. You would not use every book or periodical as an authoritative academic source, and you should exercise the same judgement and common sense when using websites.

Search wisely
A simple Google search for a topic phrase may produce thousands of results, not in order of their academic level! Consider who may have the information you need and go there directly: for instance, a Government website for statistics on British society, or a medical research charity for research reports on a specific pharmaceutical trial. Try Google Scholar or databases like Web of Knowledge (via the Library’s website) to source journal articles.

Evaluate carefully
Academic books and journal articles go through a process of evaluation by experts before they are published. Most websites do not. Consequently you need to do your own evaluation before deciding whether to use an online source. Things to think about include:

- Is it associated with an authoritative organisation? E.g. a university, research group, official or Government body? Check the URL extension: for instance .ac.uk, .edu, .gov would all be okay.
- What sort of reader do you think it is aimed at? E.g. academic, popular, juvenile?
- Is there a date of last publication?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Is its purpose to support or promote a particular viewpoint or agenda, or a commercial purpose? (Not necessarily a reason not to use it, but a warning to be cautious and critical.)

Cite correctly
There are models for citing online sources in all of the different styles of referencing. The key is to look for the equivalent details to those you would need to cite a book or journal article: author, date, title and publication details. Then add the date you accessed it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author Year Title Place of publication/Publisher</td>
<td>Author/ Organisation with responsibility for website Year of last publication (or use ‘n.d.’ for ‘not dated’) Title of website/webpage URL (or DOI if electronic document)</td>
<td>The Higher Education Academy 2013 Academic Integrity <a href="http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/academic-integrity">http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/academic-integrity</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In-text citation (in Harvard style): The Higher Education Academy, 2013.