

“death penalty” and “Mozambique,” Google will list all of the hits in order from best to worst according to how it determines relevance to the search terms. For each hit, it provides both a link to the site and a brief synopsis of the Web page with the key words indicated in bold print. This allows you to quickly scan the list of hits to determine their relevance for your specific research project.

Because anybody can publish anything on the Internet, you must carefully evaluate the Web sites you use in your research. Your first step is to be aware of the purpose of the site you are using. Is it trying to sell something, advocate an idea or agenda, or just present information? Ask yourself if the source might be biased, and if the answer is yes, view the information skeptically. Next, ask yourself if the information is dated. People may have posted information years ago and never updated it.

You can use the following simple questions to help you evaluate your sites:

1. Who is responsible for the information?
2. Is the author or organization qualified to present this information?
3. Is it possible that the author has a bias?
4. Have reputable groups endorsed or cited this material?
5. What is the date of the material?

By following these simple suggestions, you can improve the quality of your evidence and help ensure that your evidence supports your arguments in meaningful and productive ways.

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS IN CHAPTER 12



- Research is important for debaters because it helps them to discover both general and specific knowledge.
- The key to successful debate research is the development of a plan.
- One successful plan involves conceiving of research as two distinct phases: generating general knowledge and generating specific knowledge.

NOTES

1. Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, eds., *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996), 45. See also Antoine Braet, “The Classical Doctrine of Statua and the Rhetorical Theory of Argumentation,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* (1987): 79–93.

2. The first four questions were provided by Hermagoras; the fifth question was added later because of its popularity.

3. van Eemeren, et al., 47.