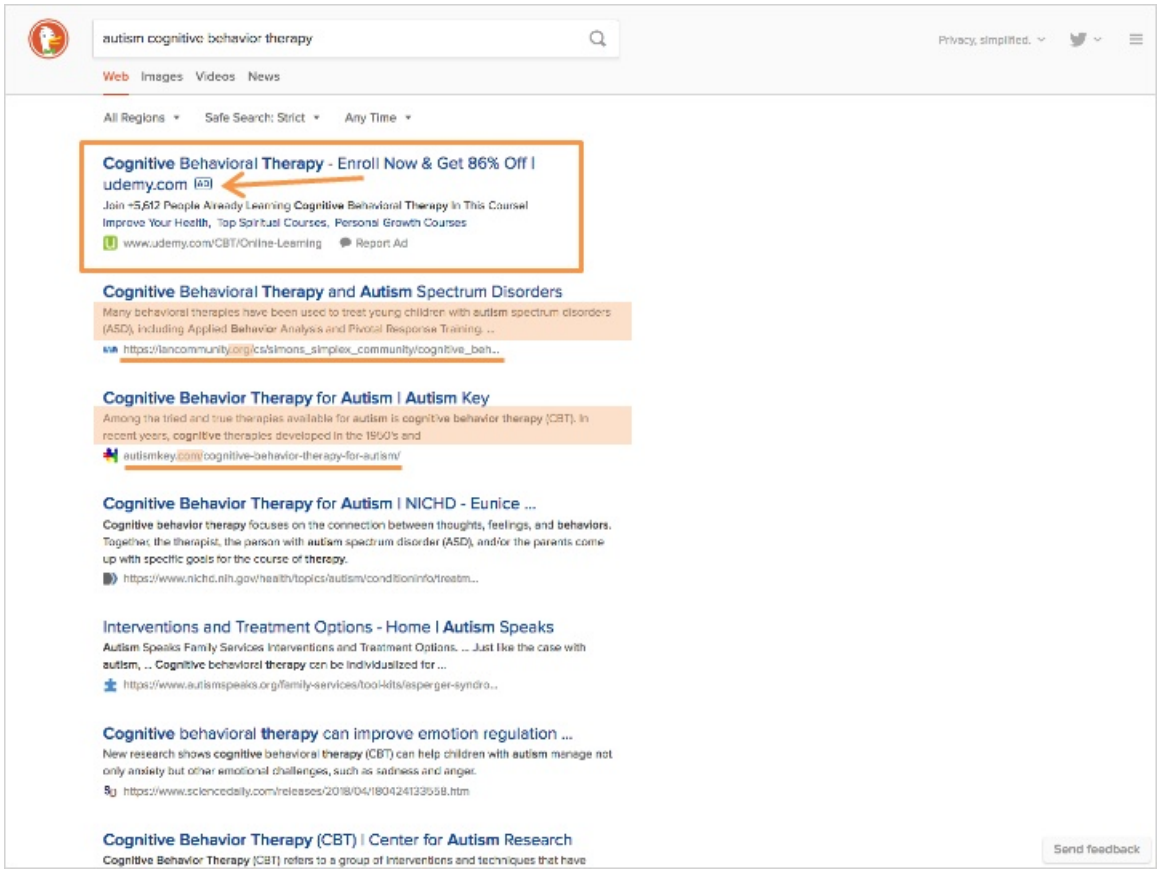
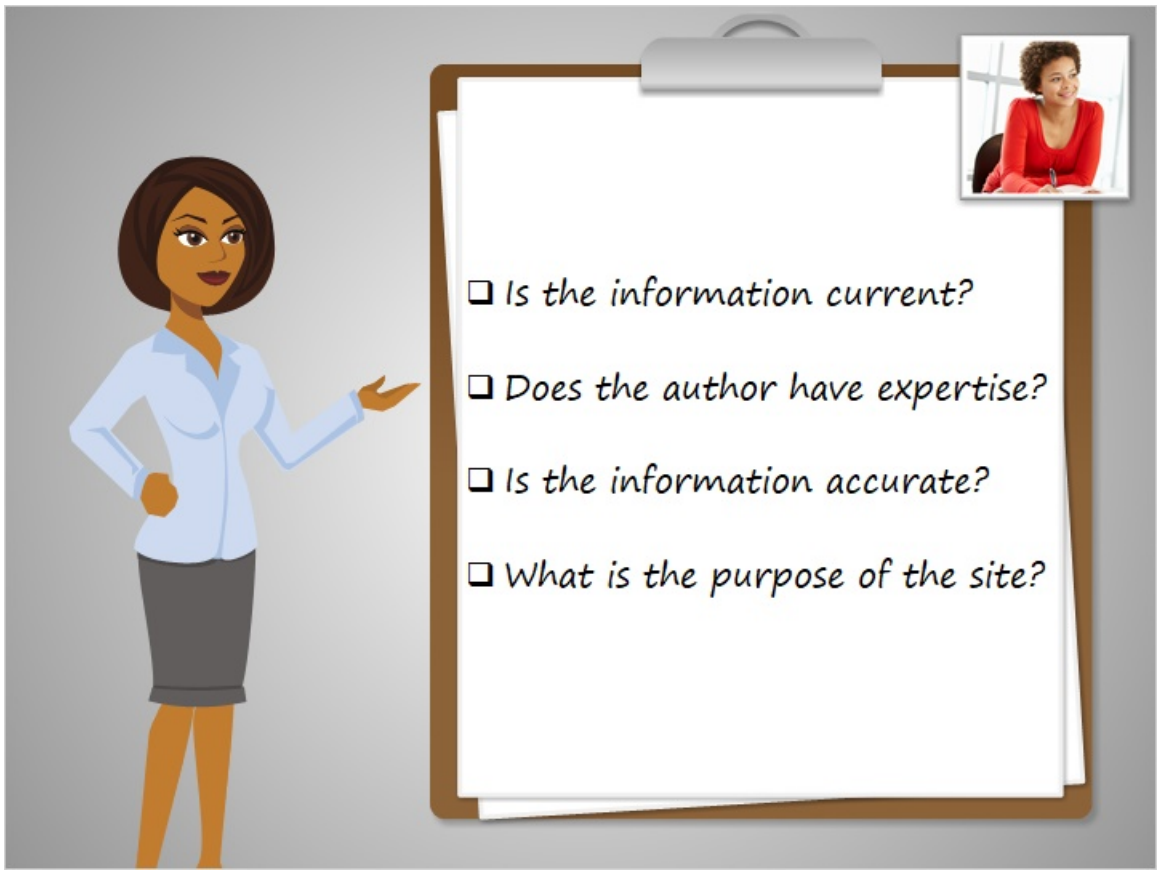
Evaluating Sources



The first thing Della notices in her search results is that it is more difficult to tell which links come from trusted sources.

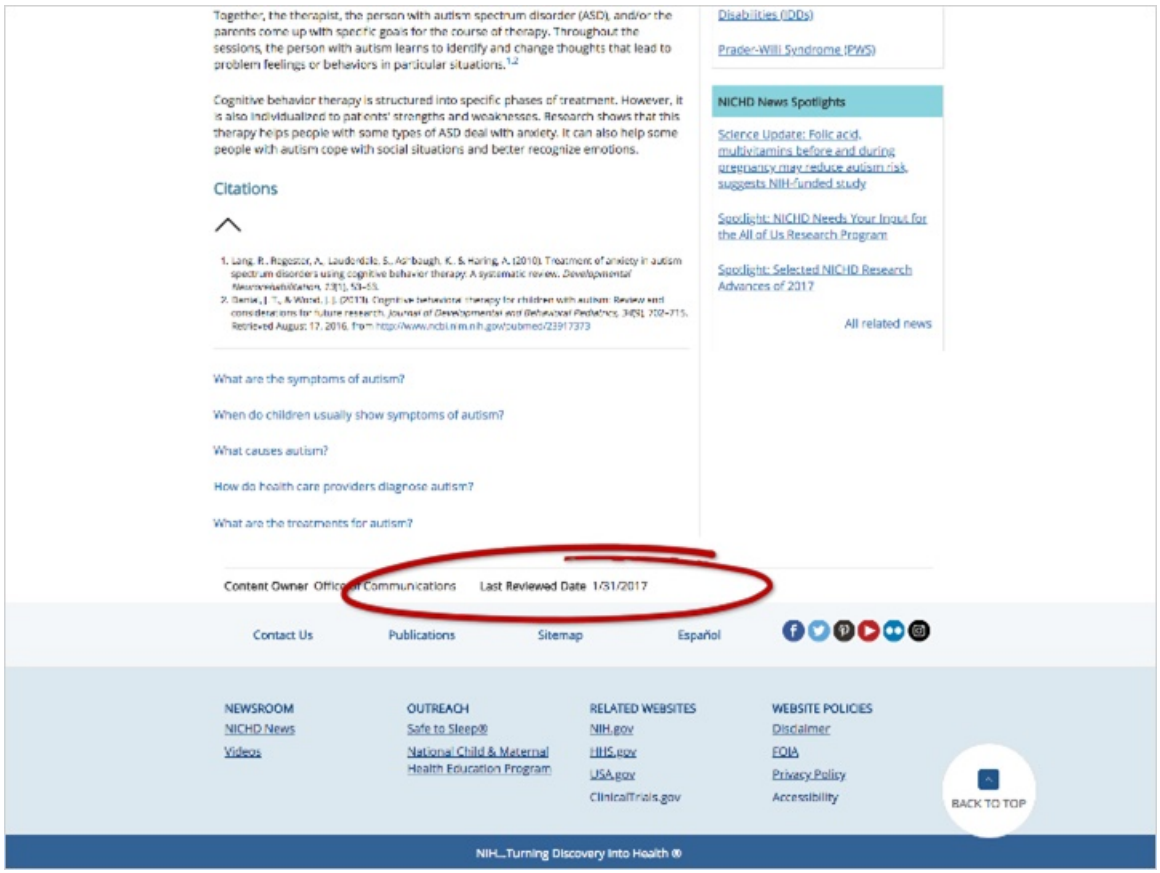
Della feels a little bit overwhelmed by what she finds.

She can see that some of the links are ads, indicated by the Ad icon next to the link. She sees that some of the links end in .org and some of them end in .com. The brief descriptions don't tell her much about the information contained in the website.

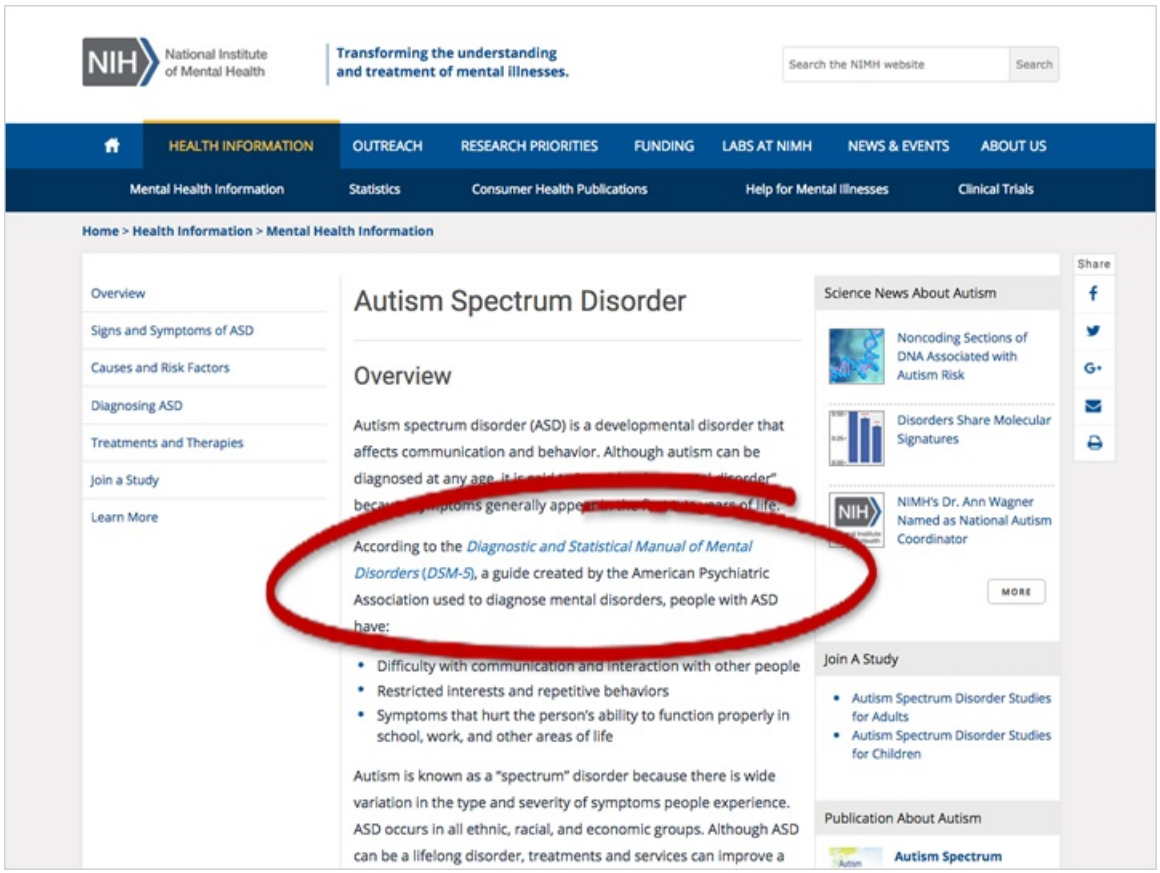


Here are some questions to help Della evaluate websites in her search results. This will help her make a more informed decision about which websites she can trust.

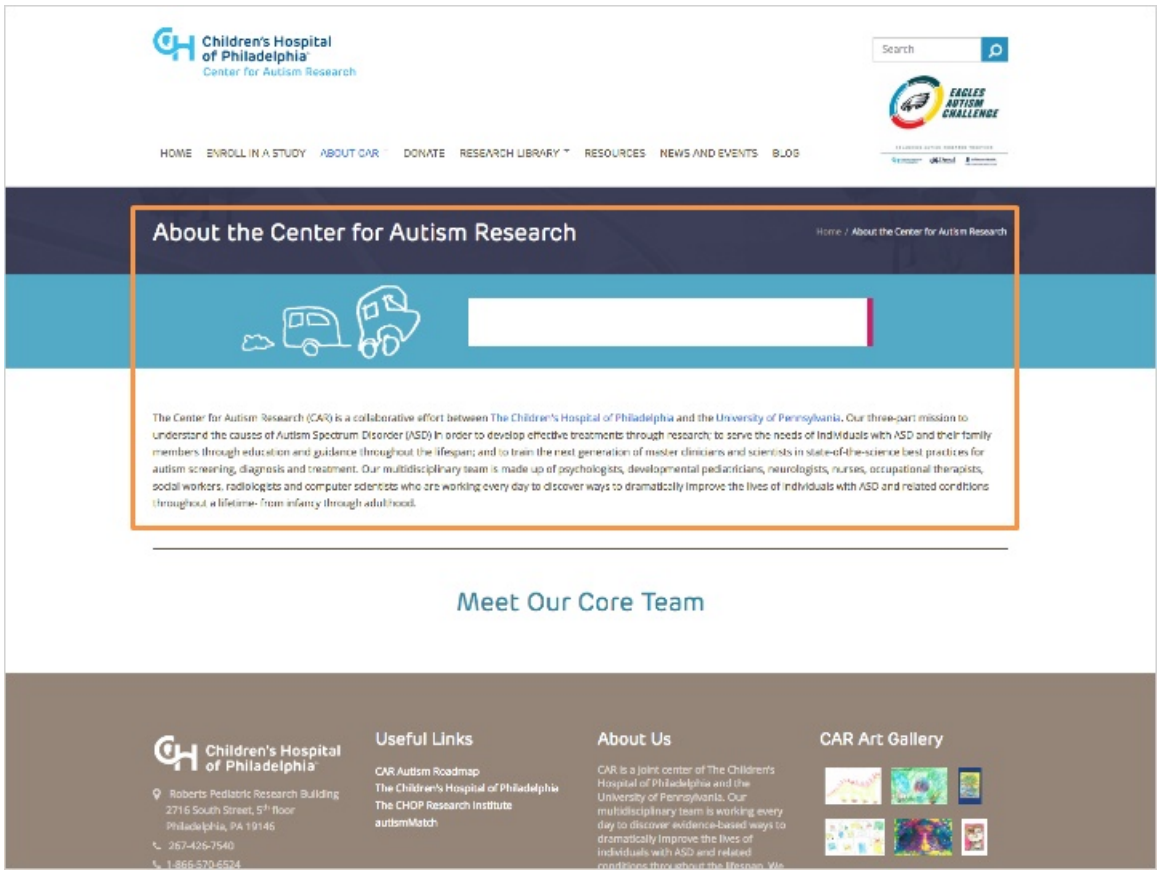
- Is the information current?
- Does the author have expertise?
- Is the information accurate?
- What is the purpose of the site?



Is the information current? Look for a publication date for the article or web page. The date can often be found at the top of the article. Sometimes it is found at the bottom of the web page. If you cannot find a specific date, or if the article is too old, then the information may contain expired or outdated information. Articles that have been published more recently or that cite recent research are more likely to be trustworthy.

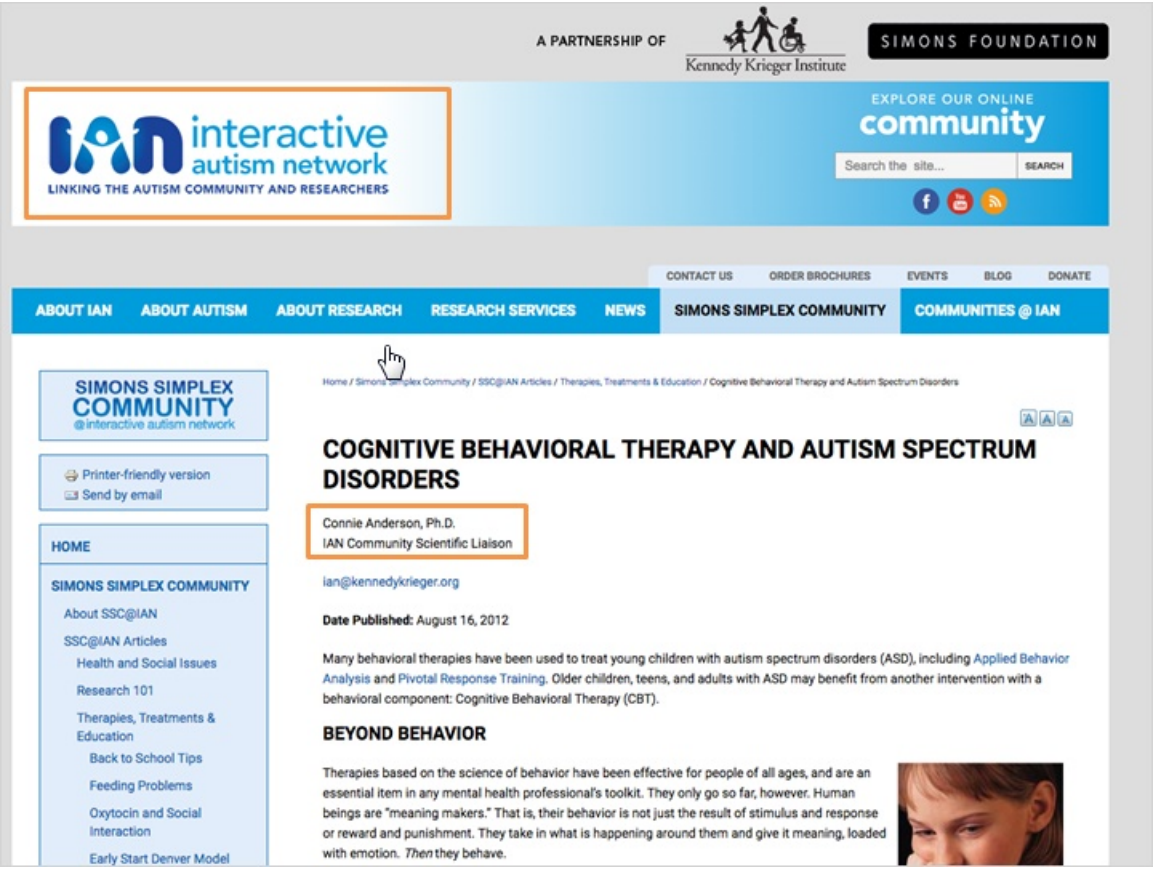


Is the information accurate? We want to use health information that cites facts and scientific research. Look for citations at the end of the article or web page. Or, look for links within the text that point to sources that verify the facts within the article.



Does the author have expertise in the subject? When it comes to our health, we want to get information from doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals. Try to locate the credentials of the author of the article, as well as information about the organization hosting the website. If you cannot verify the authority and expertise of the source, the information may not be trustworthy.

What is the purpose of the site? Some websites that contain health information are intended for patients, but some sites serve a different purpose. Health information may be intended to raise public awareness about a condition. Health information sites may be sponsored by ads. Beware of ads that may be trying to sell you a medicine or treatment. Or, health information may be published by a corporation that is profiting from people who view the site. Look for websites that are not earning a profit to find more trustworthy information.



Now that Della has learned some strategies for evaluating health information, she is more confident reviewing her search results. Della chooses a recent article about cognitive behavioral therapy. The author has expertise in the subject, and the article is published by a non-profit organization.