

HOW TO TRUST A WEBSITE WHEN BUYING ONLINE

The Top Ten factors to look for on a website so you can measure it's credibility before you enter credit card details



- 1 HTTPS
- 2 QUALITY OF DESIGN
- 3 SPELLING & CONTENT
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1 HTTPS

Look at the address bar and check for https:// at the start of the domain name when you checkout. HTTPS is only necessary during the checkout process. Some sites have HTTP on the home page and their checkout pages then switch to HTTPS – this is okay.

On the left of the address bar is a padlock symbol, click on this and the Trust Certificate is shown.

2 QUALITY OF DESIGN

The design quality of a website is a strong indication that time and money has been invested. The more investment in a site, the more likely it is to be trustworthy.

Good design also extends to the quality of images used. Stock images are acceptable as page images but when used as team member photos they can indicate the site has something to hide.

3 SPELLING & CONTENT

Look for any dates on content pages, such as the blog, or articles on the site. Recent content means the site is being updated on a regular basis and another indicator of site investment. If pages don't have dates, look out for anything topical or seasonal that could indicate when it was written.

Read the page/site copy and assess for typos, mistakes and badly written grammar and punctuation. Copy doesn't have to be journalist perfect but it should be reasonably well written with good spelling and punctuation.

4 LINKS OUT OF SITE

Look at the footer, the sidebars and the page content: does the site have a high number of links going out to other sites? Or does the site have limited links out to trusted websites? A high number of links out to low quality sites and especially links out to foreign language sites are cause for alert.

If you hover over a link, the destination will show in the bottom left corner, or you can click on the link to visit.

5 CUSTOMER SERVICE

'Contact us', 'About us' and any customer service pages are usually found in the footer menu if not the main menu. A refund/delivery/about us statement will say a lot about the credibility of a site. Make sure you are happy with delivery lead times and that you can easily return items or get help if there is an issue with your purchase.

It's essential that an ecommerce site have contactable customer services (preferably by phone), if they don't think twice before ordering.

6 BANNER ADS/POP UPS

Is the home page overloaded with flashing banner ads? A page loaded with ads can be a signal of a low quality site built purely to make money from advertising. If a site has pop up ads opening in windows behind your browser then ditch the site.

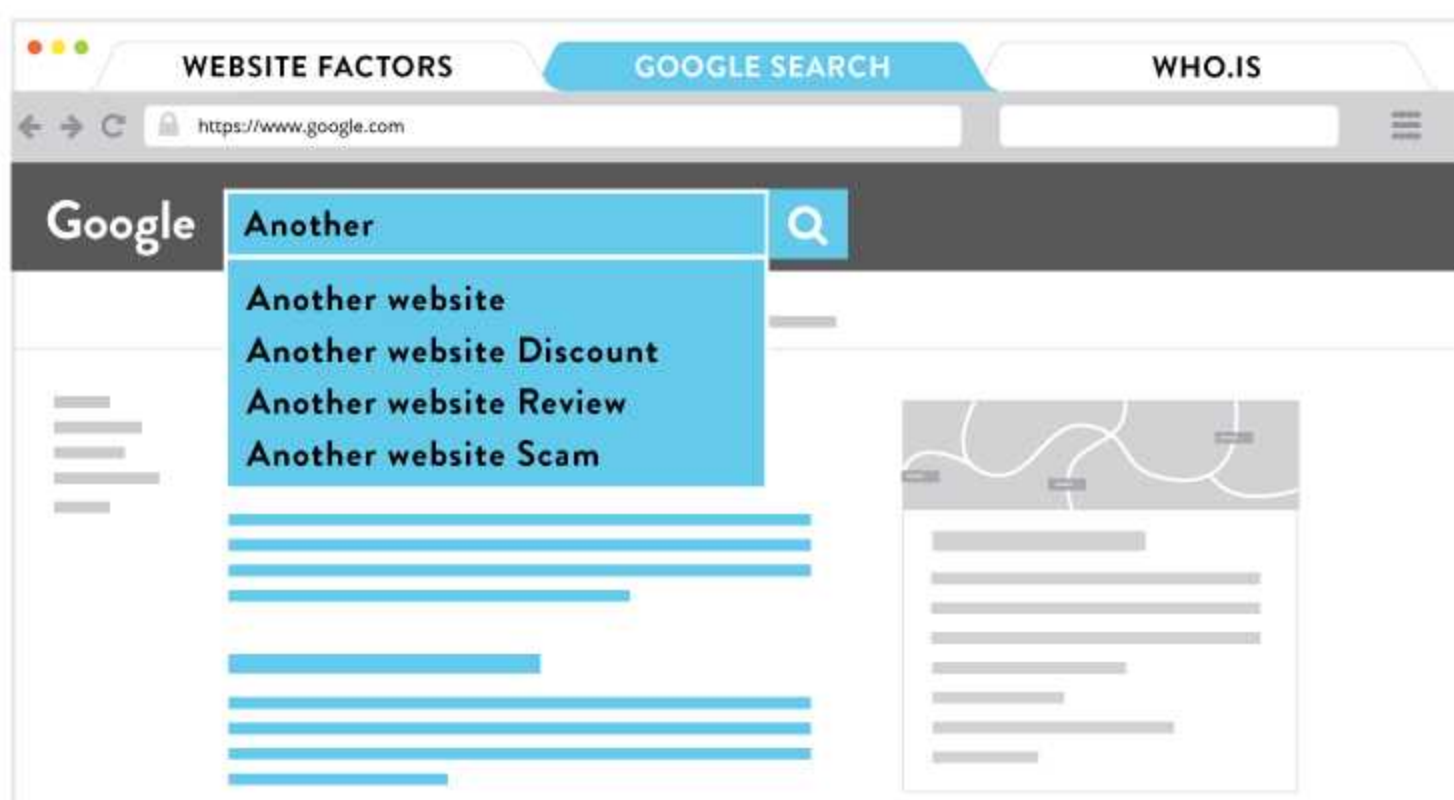
8 COMPANY NAME IN FOOTER

Look in the footer for a limited company name, company registration number or company credits. A limited company can be verified online at Companies House.

In the footer, next to the company credits should be a year for copyright purposes, check this is up-to-date. If the date is several years out-of-date then this indicates a site that isn't being managed. Therefore, orders are less likely to be processed.

7 SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

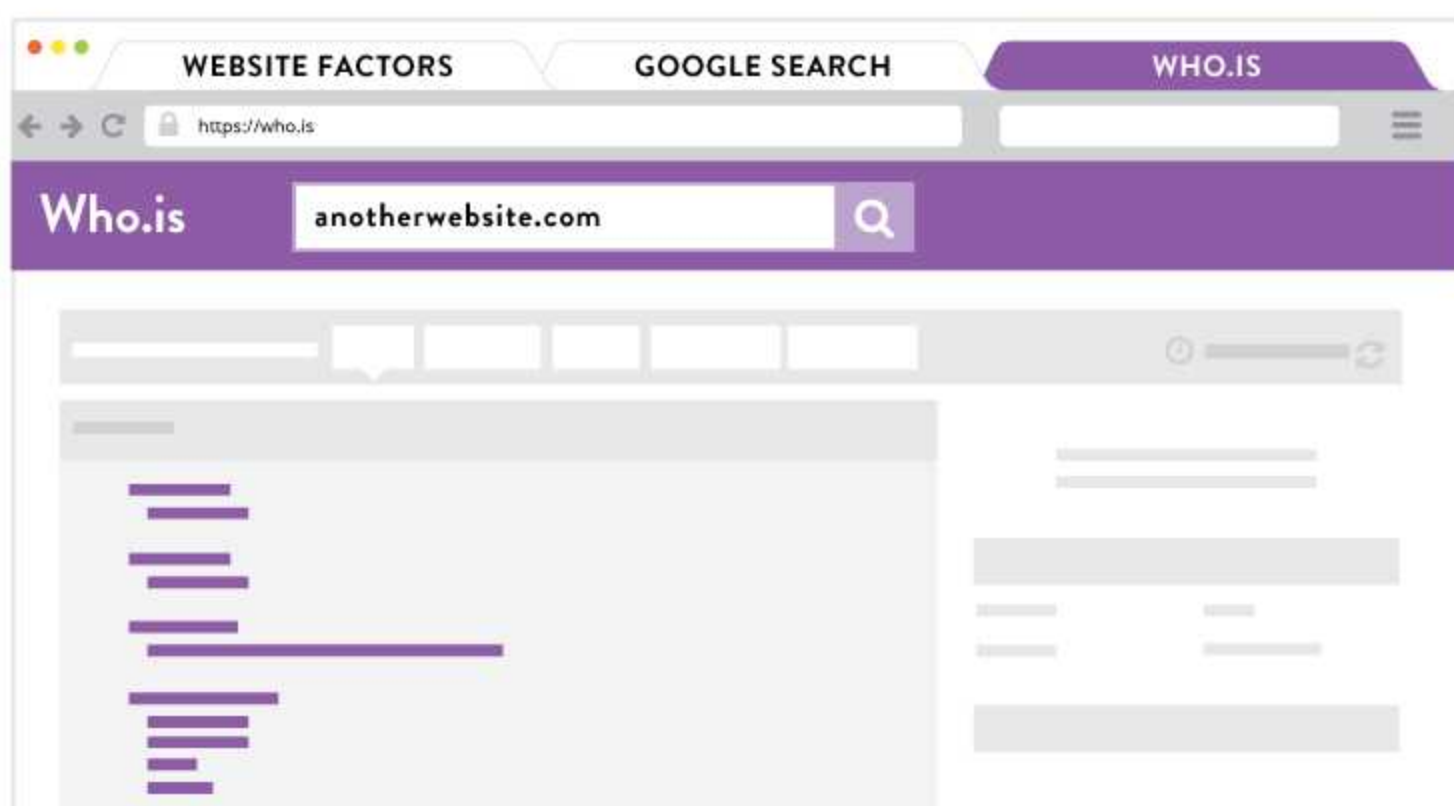
Click through any social media buttons and check the credibility of the social account – does it have many followers? Is the content regularly updated? Read the latest posts to gauge the tone of voice and read what others are saying about the site. Social media is one of the best barometers of what people have to say about their experiences with a brand. It's not infallible but is a good indicator.



9 Google search

Using Google is a strong tactic to see if there are any negative comments from other users about a website. Type the site/brand name into the search box and see if the auto-suggestion offers negative words such as 'scam' to the term. If so click on the search term to read.

Check the search listings for any mentions of the website or brand, look for anything negative.



10 Who.is

Who.is is a secret weapon for assessing the validity and credibility of a site. Enter the URL of the site to inspect and you will be presented with the registration details of the domain owner.

Check the date of registration; older sites tend to be more trustworthy.

Also check the country of the registered owner; use your judgement as to the authenticity of a site operating as a seller in the UK being registered to a domain owner in Russia or the Philippines.

SOURCES

<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-gb/windows-8/when-to-trust-a-website>
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HTTPS>
<https://www.mcafeesecure.com/>
<https://www.symantec.com/en/uk/page.jsp?id=seal-transition>
<https://www.truste.com/>
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