

Evaluating Resources: Credibility Criteria

There are many *aspects* of information sources which can help you decide if a source is appropriate to use in your research. The following are questions to ask yourself to help determine if a source is useful for your research or not.

Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Who wrote it? ✓ What are the credentials of the author(s)? What degree(s) does the author(s) hold? From what college or university? ✓ Where does the author(s) work? Can you find their contact information? ✓ What other books or articles has the author(s) written and on what subjects? ✓ Are there editors, reviewers or sponsors listed? ✓ For web sites, what is the domain (.edu, .gov, .com), and who is responsible for the site?
Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is information presented as fact? If yes... ✓ Does the author provide documentation? (Bibliography, Footnotes, etc.) ✓ If documentation/sources are included, are they from credible sources?
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What is the purpose of this information—to inform, explain, or persuade? ✓ Who is the intended audience (general public, students, researchers, etc.)? Is the content aimed at a general audience, or is it written for readers with expertise in the subject? ✓ Does the source argue a perspective or specific opinion? ✓ Is the source intended to entertain or sell?
Evenness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is any sort of bias evident? ✓ If there is bias, does the author acknowledge it? ✓ Does the information appear to be valid, well-researched, and supported by evidence? ✓ Does the information provide several points of view or just one? ✓ Does the information reflect the agenda of a political, religious or social group or institution?
Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Does this source provide information that is relevant to your needs? ✓ Is the content level appropriate for your needs, i.e. not too basic, not too technical or advanced? ✓ How does the author(s) explore the subject—detailed and in-depth, superficially with brief information, or an outline and some exploration? ✓ Is the information considered scholarly or popular? ✓ Is the information organized, logical, and clearly presented?
Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is the information current for the topic? ✓ What is the copyright date? ✓ For a web site, when was it produced, mounted on the web and last updated? ✓ For a web site, how up-to-date are the links? ✓ Is the information a first edition or a revised and updated edition?