

Evaluating Sources

As you start collecting print, media, and electronic sources that match your topic and assignment, you'll want to evaluate, or think critically about, the sources you encounter. Even though a book, article, video, or webpage matches your search criteria and appears to be relevant, that does not mean it is necessarily a reliable source of information. Use the following criteria to help decide whether a source is of high enough quality to use for your research project.

Accuracy

- How reliable and free from error is the information? (i.e. typos? missing facts or citations?)
- Are there editors and fact checkers?
- For a website, what is the domain code (.gov, .edu, .com, .net) and what does that indicate about the content?

Authority

- Who is the author?
- What are the author's qualifications for writing on this subject?
- How reputable is the publisher?
- For a website, who is responsible for producing and updating the information? Is "About us" or contact information available?

Coverage

- What topics are included in the work?
- Are the topics explored in depth?
- Does the author list his/her sources and cited works?

Currency

- Is the content of the work up-to-date?
- When was the material last updated? Is there a copyright date on the page?
- Is the publication date clearly labeled?

Objectivity

- Is the information presented with a minimum of bias?
- Does the author explore several different viewpoints?
- To what extent is the information trying to sway the opinion of the audience?

Additional Resources

- [Evaluating Information Found on the Internet](#) (Johns Hopkins Univ.)
- [Reading URLs](#) (St. Cloud Univ.)
- [Links to Additional Sites with Web Evaluation Materials](#) (Cornell Univ.)

For help selecting and evaluating resources, contact a librarian at 603-542-7744 extension 336 or jallen@ccsnh.edu.

