



Evaluating Sources of Information

By analyzing sources of information using the following questions, you will have started the Information Refinement process.

This handout may also be useful for annotated bibliographies.

Writing Style

- Is there an identifiable introduction?
- What conclusions are drawn?
- Does the conclusion make sense to you?
- What is the author's bias?

Purpose and General Rationale

- What is the reason for providing the information?
- Is the data provided fact, opinion, propaganda, or a combination?
- What facts or ideas did you read that are worthy of note?

Authority

- What do you know about the author's credentials or expertise?
- Is the publication or website associated with an individual, institution or organization?
- Does the source provide contact information for the author, editor, and/or publisher, including where they can be reached if you have any questions?

Currency (Currentness)

- When was the information provided last updated and how frequently is it updated?
- If it's a journal, how recently was it published? Has evidence come out more recently that refutes the claims made in the article?
- If it's a website, does it appear stable and are there indications that it will be maintained?

Audience

- Who was this source created for? Academics? General public? Researchers? Governments?
- What is the reading level of the publication?
- Is the source free or available for a fee?

Content

- Are you viewing the entire text or part of a larger document?
- Are references provided?
- Are there references or links to additional documents for more details?
- Is the information provided popular or scholarly?

Sources

- Where did the information come from?
- Who put it there?
- Does the site provide information about the authors and where they got their information?

Completeness

- Are you viewing the entire text or part of a larger document?
- Are references provided?
- Are there references or links to additional documents for more details?
- Are there any warnings or cautions from the author regarding the interpretation of results?

Research

- What kind of research was conducted?
- Was the data collection qualitative or quantitative?
- What data collection instruments were used? (tests, questionnaires, ethnographic observations)
- Who were the participants in the study?
- Where did the study take place?
- What were the main procedural steps in the study?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Browne, M. N. & Keeley, S. M. (1986) *Asking the right questions: A guide to critical thinking*. Englewoods, NJ: Prentice Hall.
PN83.B785 1986

Locke, L. F., Silverman, S.J., & Spirduso, W. W. (2004). *Reading and understanding research*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
Q180.A1 L63 2004

Holosko, M. j. (2006). *Primer for critiquing social research: A student guide*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Brooks/Cole.
H62.H59 2006