

Evaluating Resources

*Here is a list of criteria you should use to evaluate your resources.
Each criterion includes a list of guiding questions to help you evaluate each resource.*

Author

- Does the author have authority on the topic?
- What are the author's credentials?
 - Does the author have a graduate degree in the area she or he is writing about and/or do they teach at a university?
 - Are they associated with an organization that is concerned about the issues that the author is writing about?
- Has the author written any other works? [You might search the author's name in other databases and/or the web]
- Consult Web of Science to see how many and what other publications the author has written
- Do other authors/publications cite this author? (Some databases, including Web of Science, provide this information)
- If the content is located on a specific organization's web site, what do you know about the organization?
- Is contact information provided for the author or creator?

Publisher

- What, if anything, do you already know about the publisher?
- Consult the publisher's website to help answer the following questions:
 - Do they have a reputation for publishing quality information?
 - Does the publisher have a clearly articulated editorial policy?
 - Is the publisher a university press, a large commercial publisher, a small publisher, or an alternative press?
- Consult Ulrich's Web Online (Guide to Periodicals) to learn more about the journal and publisher (scholarly or not, how long it has been published, etc.)
- Consult Web of Science to see measurement of impact of the journal

Type of Information

- Is the information scholarly, popular, governmental or from a private business? What influence does this have on how you use the information?
- Has the author looked at the material objectively?
- Is there a consensus of opinion on this topic? What are the important ideas?
- Does the source provide information relevant to your research focus/thesis argument?
- How does the source help answer your research questions?

Purpose

- What is the purpose of the source? How will it impact your research? Is the purpose to inform, entertain, teach, or to influence?
- Is the author giving a factual report, presenting a well-researched scholarly opinion, or relaying a personal opinion?
- Who is the intended audience--general public or other academics and researchers?
- Does the author offer several points of view?
- Can you identify objective writing (both sides of the argument) or a subjective bias (expressing one's own point of view)?

Sources

- Can you determine where the author gathered the information? (hint: in addition to citations and footnotes, look for in-text references to outside sources)
- Is the material from original research, experiments, observation, interviews, books or documents?
- Are secondary references (a bibliography, for example) provided?

Currency

- When was the material published?
- Is the information accurate for when it was written?
- Does your research demand current information or is older information useful?
- How often is research updated in this discipline?
- Is the website updated frequently?

Style

- Is the writing style of the author clear and understandable? Does the author legitimately need to use complex language because of the subject matter, or is complex technical language used to possibly confuse the reader?
- Are helpful charts, graphs, or pictures provided?