

Criteria for Evaluating Sources

Here are a few broad principles to apply when determining whether or not a source is of sufficient quality to include in your research assignment (e.g. paper, presentation, etc.) These criteria apply to the entire spectrum of resources available in print and online: books, articles, and websites.

Relevance: *Specificity to your Research Topic*

Does this resource directly relate to the research questions you have formulated?

- Does it provide answers to your questions?
- Does it propel you with more specific questions?

Does this resource provide information that you have not found in other sources?

Does this resource suggest additional references to other sources you can investigate (e.g. citations, footnotes, hyperlinks)?

- Does this resource fit the context of scholarly research: complex ideas and arguments supported with well-documented evidence? What is the level of the writing and overall presentation of information?
- Who is the intended audience for this resource?

Credibility: *Authority & Objectivity*

Who is identified as the author or creator of the work?

- Is this a subject area the author has published about previously? Have you seen this author cited by other scholars? What indication do you have that the author is an expert on this topic?
- What are the author's formal credentials and relevant experience? Consider factors such as: the author's publishing record, educational background, teaching experience, institutional affiliations.
- If the resource is a website, apply the same criteria in evaluating the authority of the source.
- For articles in journals: Is this a peer-reviewed publication?

Accuracy: *Evidence, Citations, Corroboration*

- Does this resource support the information it provides with documentation or evidence such as citations, footnotes, hyperlinks?
- Does the information in this resource contradict your findings in other sources?

Currency: *How Recent? How Influential?*

- Does your topic require current information? If so, make note of when this resource was published or updated. Is this an appropriately timely source for your research project?
- If you are examining an older source, you may consider whether this resource provides essential background information which is still cited by contemporary literature in your field.