

Evaluating Information

In today's information-rich world, not all sources are equally trustworthy. Conducting effective research requires careful evaluation to ensure the information you use is credible and reliable. But how can you determine whether a source meets these standards? This guide provides practical strategies to help you assess the reliability of information and make informed decisions for your research.

Currency: Timeliness of information	When was the information published or posted? Has the information been revised or updated? Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well? Are the links functional?
Relevance: Importance of information for your needs	Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question? Who is the intended audience Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary/advanced for your needs)? Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use? Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research paper?
Authority: Source of information	Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor? What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations? Is the author qualified to write on the topic? Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address? Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? (.com, .edu, .gov, .org, .net, etc.)
Accuracy: Reliability, truthfulness and correctness of content	Where does the information come from? Is the information supported by evidence? Has the information been peer-reviewed/refereed? Can you verify the information through additional sources or from personal knowledge? Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of provocative language? Are there spelling, grammatical, or typographical errors?
Purpose: Reason the information exists	What is the purpose of the information? (teach, inform, entertain, sell, persuade, etc.) Are the authors/sponsors transparent about their intention/purpose? Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda? Does the point of view appear objective and impartial? Are there apparent biases? (political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, personal)