

Evaluation of Information, Source & Content

Remember to evaluate the source and its content!

3 main points to evaluate

1. Compare information between sources. What are the similarities and differences?
2. Corroborate information between sources. Verify information with various reviewed sources.
3. Reviewed sources have a higher degree of reliability and are an excellent place to start a comparison and corroboration of information.

Additional features to evaluate

Evaluate Source: Books

1. Author
 - a. authority and expertise
 - b. author's education
 - c. past writings
 - d. experience
 - e. affiliation with reputable institutions
2. Publisher - A source associated with a university such as University Press of Oxford indicates that it is a scholarly work. However, a reputable publisher does not always indicate high quality just that the publisher supports the source.
3. Currency
 - a. How does the information relate to your topic?
 - b. Does your topic need current or historical information?
 - c. Is the information too current or out-of-date for your topic?
4. Revisions - Further editions indicate that the information has been updated and has included previous omissions. It also reveals source has become a standard in the subject and reliable.

Evaluate Source: Periodicals - Journals are scholarly works with original research. Magazines are popular periodicals.

Journal characteristics are:

1. Citations that support the information – bibliography or footnotes
2. Author – scholar or expert in the subject
3. Language – associated with the field and assumes reader has some scholarly experience
4. Charts and tables
5. Many are sponsored by professional organizations or academic institutions
6. Reports on original research

Magazine characteristics are:

1. No bibliography, footnotes, or citations that support the information
2. Author – journalist or generalist covering a range of topics
3. Audience is the general public
4. Glossy and colorful pictures and a cover that attracts attention
5. Prominent advertisement

Evaluate Source: Web Sites

1. Do some prelim research and reading in reliable sources to gain background information before searching Internet.
2. URL
 - a. Extension or type of domain (.com, .net, .gov, .edu, .org, .mil)
 - b. Symbols (~, %) that represent personal web pages
3. Authority - Evaluating author/designer
 - a. Who is making the statement?
 - b. What authority or experience does she/he have?
 - c. Why is she/he making the statement?
4. Currency
 - a. How often is the information updated?
 - b. Is the information current?

Evaluate Content of Source

1. What is the main idea?
2. Does the information relate to your topic?
3. Who is the intended audience? Is the information too basic or too technical for your research?
4. Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?
5. Is the information researched and valid?
6. Are there any errors or omissions?
7. Does the information correspond with other sources?
8. Is it a primary or secondary source?
9. How accurate is the content?
10. What is the author doing to establish the truth of the statement?
11. What are other sources stating about it?
12. What is its purpose? To inform? To advocate a position? To sell a product?