

Evaluating Information

No matter how information is presented, whether it's as a research article, a webpage, or a chapter in a book, it is important to review that information critically in order to evaluate it. Here are some questions you can ask as you review research sources.

Content

What type of information is the source (a book, journal article, website)?

Is it a primary or secondary source?

What aspects of the topic are covered?

What is the level of detail in the source (a broad overview, detailed original research)?

Can you tell if the material is current or up-to-date?

Accuracy and Authority

Who created this source (individual author, University press, government agency)?

Can you determine the author or publisher's credentials or authority to write on the topic?

Has the source been reviewed or refereed?

Is the information verifiable in other sources?

Is there sufficient documentation in the source (within the text and in the works cited)?

Relevancy

Does the source meet your research needs?

Is the information current enough for your topic or do you need historical information?

Is the source written at an appropriate academic level?

Does the source have the features that you need (graphs, charts, illustrations, bibliography)?

Purpose

Is the source written to inform? - persuade? - sell?

Does the content have a political, ideological, cultural, religious, or personal bias?

Is the source intended to serve as a broad background source or to answer a more specific, detailed question?

Who is the intended audience for this source?