# Evaluating Information

| Criteria | Questions to Ask |
|---|---|
| **1. What is it?**<br>Look at how information is **packaged** for clues about what it is and how it can be used? | • Look for **physical clues** as to the origin of the information.<br>• In what **medium** was the item created and distributed (print, electronic, artifact)?<br>• How was the information **published** (or not)?<br>• Is it a **piece of a larger entity** (chapter, article, webpage from a website)? |
| **2. Authority / Credibility**<br>Determining the **author** of a source is important in deciding whether information is credible. The author should show some evidence of being knowledgeable, reliable and truthful. | • **Who** is the author (person, company, or organization)?<br>• Can you describe the **author's background** (experience, education, knowledge)?<br>• Does the **publisher** specialize in certain subject areas of knowledge?<br>• Does the author provide **citations**? Do other sources cite this source? |
| **3. Purpose**<br>Asking **why information was created** can help determine how (or if) it should be used for research. | • Is the information **fact or opinion**?<br>• Who is the intended **audience**?<br>• What is the **purpose or motive** for the source (educational, commercial, entertainment, promotional, etc.)?<br>• Identify possible **bias** of the author, publisher or sponsor. |
| **4. Accuracy**<br>The source should contain **accurate** and up-to-date information that can be verified by other sources. | • Can facts or statistics be **verified** through another source?<br>• Does the information seem **accurate**? Does it match the information found in other sources? |
| **5. Scope / Relevance**<br>It is important that the source **meets the information needs and requirements** of your research assignment. | • Does the source cover your topic **comprehensively** or does it cover only one aspect?<br>• To what extent does the source **answer your research question**?<br>• Is the source considered **popular or scholarly**? |
| **6. Currency / Date**<br>Some written works are ageless (e.g., classic literature) while others (e.g., technological news) become outdated quickly. It is important to determine if **currency** is pertinent to your research. | • **When** was the source written and published?<br>• **Is currency important** to your research? |

**Where does this fall on the cycle of information?**



Today
Social Media,
TV, Web

Year+ Later
Books, Government
Reports

Next Day
Newspapers

Cycle of
Information

Months Later
Scholarly Journals

Weeks Later
Popular Periodicals