

Checklist for Evaluating Information

Before Evaluating

It is important to start with a clear idea of what you are looking for. What is your topic?
Has your instructor placed any restrictions on your research? – Format restrictions (books, periodicals, Web, scholarly journals, etc.) – Date restrictions (for example: only information from last five years is allowed)
If your topic is controversial do you need information on all sides of the issue?

Appropriateness

Strong Weak Unable to Determine

Are the contents relevant to your topic or assignment?			
What audience is the information written for? (general public, experts, scholars, etc.)			
Is the reading level appropriate to your needs?			
Is the information too brief or too detailed?			
If a Web site: is it easy to distinguish advertising from information content?			

Authority

Who is the author?			
What do you know about the author's educational background and professional affiliation?			
If no author is provided is there an organization responsible for the information?			
Who is the publisher (a university, government organization, private entity, publishing company)? Does this indicate bias or a conflict of interest?			

Authority (cont'd)**Strong****Weak****Unable to
Determine**

If a Web site: what does the domain (such as: .edu, .com, .gov, .net, .org.) tell you about the reliability of the information?			
Does the author say where he or she got the information? Is there a bibliography or list of references? Do the sources appear reputable and appropriate for the subject?			

Accuracy

Are there errors in fact, spelling, grammar or other signs of carelessness?			
Is the information consistent with what you have found elsewhere?			

Currency

What is the date of publication?			
Is currency important to your topic?			

Objectivity

Is the information biased? Does it take a particular point of view or perspective?			
Does the identity of the author suggest bias?			
If it is biased is it still useful?			
Is the information presented as fact, opinion or both?			
Does the source use sweeping language (like <i>always</i> , <i>never</i> or <i>every</i>)?			
Does it include all relevant information or only that which supports a particular point of view?			