

HOW TO EVALUATE INFORMATION

It is important to take a critical look at any information that you decide to believe or use, especially Internet sources. Anyone can publish online. “Information” includes bad information, dated information, misinformation, and propaganda. How can you distinguish good reputable sources? Rather than assuming a source is trustworthy, we all have to remember to ask ourselves the following questions.

Source and Authority

- Can you easily identify who wrote the information and their credentials?
- What more can you learn about the author or institution affiliated with the page? Look for a biography or “about us” section.
- Can the information be verified through its bibliography or footnotes?
- If online, what does the domain name or URL tell you about the authority and interests of the source of the information? (.gov, .edu, .org, .com, etc.)

Scope and Content

- What is the scope or coverage of the information: Is it brief or in depth?
- Is it written for a popular audience or is it more technical and scholarly?

Purpose and Relevance

- Is it written to inform, explain, or persuade?
- Can you discover any bias to the perspective of the author?
- Does the information appear to be directed to a select audience?
- Does it relate well to information you found in other works?

Timeliness and Accuracy

- When was the information created or last revised?
- Is it up-to-date and accurate?
- Overall, is the information valid and current for the given topic?