



Evaluating Your Sources

It is important to remember that not all information is reliable and trustworthy. This means you must evaluate the information you find and determine its reliability and usefulness for your purposes. The questions below will help you evaluate the information you gather.

	Books and Articles	Web Sites and Web Pages
	<i>Undergo editorial and publishing process. Books are often reviewed. Articles may undergo a review process, and are called "peer-reviewed," "juried," etc. Publishers may have a political or intellectual agenda.</i>	<i>Personal sites undergo no screening process, and can be published by anyone. Corporate or organization sites may have a political or intellectual agenda.</i>
Author Who (or what group) created this information, and do they have the needed expertise?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the author's qualifications? Do they indicate degrees or affiliations that show they have the authority to give facts and opinions on this topic? Are sources quoted reliable and having expertise? • Is this article in a reputable journal or magazine? • Is this book published by a reputable publisher? Can you find reviews? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a named author? If so, what are the author's qualifications? • Is the sponsoring group well-respected? • Is there contact information: an e-mail address, mailing address, phone number?
Purpose Why was this source created?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why was this source written: to inform, to persuade, to sell, to report research...? • Is the information biased, limited to one point of view? Does it purport to be facts, or personal opinion? Is it accurate? Is there a bibliography? • Who is the intended audience: scholars, general public, special interest group? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the purpose of this site: to sell, to persuade, to inform, to provide personal information? Does it purport to be facts, or personal opinion? Is it accurate? Is there a bibliography? • Who is the intended audience? What does the site encourage its audience to do with this information? The URL can provide clues, see below
Date When was the source created and is it up-to-date enough for your topic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the source published? • Is the information still reliable? • Does the date of publication matter for your topic? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the web site created? • When was the web site updated? • Is the information still reliable?

Look at the URL of a web site. The ending of the address may give you clues about the purpose and reliability of the site. Here are some of the more common ones.

.gov Federal government (Informational, promoting programs and initiatives of federal gov't)
.edu College or university (Might be from established scholars, might be from students)
.net Internet provider Mixed bag. May or may not be commercial.

.org Organization Influence public opinion about an issue or cause; professional organizations promote interests of member group
.com Business or commercial Often selling something; also good for information *about* a company; also current news companies like CNN.com