EVALUATING THE CREDIBILITY OF INFORMATION SOURCES

Use the RADAR Framework to help you judge if information is credible and make an informed decision about the appropriate use of a source for your research.

RATIONALE

What is the intended purpose? (to inform, to argue, to persuade, to sell, etc.)
Who is the intended audience of this source (those with knowledge of a specific discipline or the general public?)
Is there a sponsor or advertising? Who pays to make this information available?

AUTHORITY

CHECK THE AUTHOR’S CREDIBILITY
Who is the author/s?
What are the author’s credentials or organizational affiliations?
What makes the author qualified to write about the topic?

CHECK THE SOURCE
Is the source reliable?
What is the type of publication in which the article appears? (scholarly journal, magazine, newspaper, trade, blog, etc.)
Is the publisher of the information commercial, academic, governmental, other?

DATE

CHECK THE TIMELINESS/CURRENCY
What is the date of publication?
To what extent is the timeliness of the information crucial to your research?

ACCURACY

DETERMINE THE ACCURACY AND QUALITY OF THE INFORMATION
Is the information primarily fact or opinion?
What are the author’s biases?
To what extent does the author present multiple sides of issues?
Was the information reviewed by editors or subject experts before it was published?
Can you verify the information in multiple sources?

EXAMINE THE SUPPORT
What evidence is provided for claims?
Are sources cited, and if so, how?
Are the referenced sources reliable and trustworthy? Follow links and citations.
Does the provided evidence back up the author’s claims?

RELEVANCE

Does the information support your ideas and answer your research question?

OVERALL EVALUATION

To what extent is it a credible source? Is it appropriate for your purpose?

Low Credibility

High Credibility
**EVALUATION TIPS IN A “POST-TRUTH” WORLD**

**TRIANGULATE: CHECK THE SOURCE AGAINST ITSELF AND OTHERS**
Open a new window and do a search about the publication, website, and/or author. Don’t rely on “About” pages alone to answer this question. See what others say about the organization, publisher, or author.

- Check the other stories and headlines on the site to see if it seems like a credible publication.
- Do all the stories lead back to the same source? If so, be suspicious.

**VERIFY WITH FACT-CHECKING SITES**
- FactCheck.org
- Fact Checker (The Washington Post)
- Hoax Slayer
- Politifact
- Snopes

**BE CAUTIOUS WITH TRUSTING THE QUALITY OF GOOGLE’S ORDER OF SEARCH RESULTS**
Don’t trust the order of Google’s search results as a prime indicator of quality. Go further than the top results.

**SUSPECT SENSATIONAL HEADLINES AND STORIES**
Exaggerated or provocative headlines are often “clickbait.” Don’t stop at the headline; keep exploring.

**INSPECT THE URL**
Look carefully at the URL, especially the domain. Fake sites are adding .co and .lo after what looks like a legitimate URL.

**INSPECT IMAGES**
Check if images are altered or taken from another context by using a reverse image search on Google Images or TinEye.

**READ LATERALLY**
Read from a variety of reputable sources, and know who/what is behind those sources.

**CHECK YOUR BIASES**
Confirmation bias leads people to put more stock in information that confirms their beliefs and discount information that doesn’t.