Evaluating information
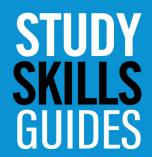
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When you are writing your assignments you will need to use a variety of quality academic sources. With so much information available how do you decide what you should use and what is not suitable? Use the questions below to check the appropriateness of the sources that you find:

Authority

- Can you tell who the author is?
- Can you tell if the author is appropriately qualified to provide the information?
- Does the author work for a particular organisation?
- Is there any information about how the work was funded?
- Was the research sponsored by a company?
- Has the information been peer reviewed or gone through an editing process?

Objectivity

- What is the purpose of the information? (to inform/sell/ persuade)
- Is the authors perspective clearly stated?
- Can you detect any bias?
- Who is the target audience?
- Is there any advertising/marketing on the page?

Timeliness

- Can you tell when the work was created or last updated?
- Does it matter for your piece of work?
- If the information comes from a website does it look like it is maintained?
- If it is a website do the links work?

Supporting evidence

- Does the author provide evidence to support his ideas or views?
- Are there accurate references to other sources that you can follow up?
- If it is online are there links to other sources?
- Is there any data or statistics provided?

Relevance

- Is the information too basic or too advanced?
- Is the emphasis of the topic appropriate to your needs?
- Does the information relate to countries you are interested in?

What is your judgment? Taking your evaluation into consideration, would you feel confident using this information as part of or in support of your research? Why/why not?

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