



## Evaluating Source Credibility

### What to Consider

#### 1. Authorship

Who is responsible for the information? Is this piece of information easy to find or is it obscured in some way? What is the person's/organization's history? Record? Education? Job description? Experience? (Ideally related to the field of study).

#### 2. Agenda/Bias

Is the source advocating something that will ultimately benefit them in some way – financially, professionally, personally, legally, etc.? How objective is their writing? Is there any reason for them to take a particular position over another?

#### 3. Sources/Research

What is the source using to back up its claims? Just as you show your research, your sources should also be forthcoming about the sources of their information. Is it a primary source or a secondary source? If it's a secondary source you might want to track down the primary source as well and perhaps use that instead. Are your sources' sources credible? Are they thorough? Do they use *convergent evidence*?

#### 4. Professionalism

Is this source a well-respected and established person or publication in the field? Do they use clear, error-free language? Do they keep a reasonable and logical tone or do they seem to be swayed mostly by emotion and personal belief?

#### 5. Timeliness

While this will matter more for some areas of research than for others, it's important to be aware of when the information was published. More current information will likely be more relevant and reliable for your research. Sometimes it will be essential, especially if you're trying to demonstrate a change that has occurred over time.

#### 6. Relevance

**This is the *last* thing you should consider. If a source is not credible, then it doesn't matter if it is relevant to your research.** However, you should ask yourself: is the source writing about something that is useful to and related to the research question you're investigating? In what way will it help you?