

Criteria for Critically Analyzing Sources of Information

1. Check the credibility of the author.

- a. What are the author's credentials?
- b. Is the source in an area of expertise of the author?
- c. What else has the author written?
- d. Are other publications credible?
- e. Has this author been referenced in other related sources?
- f. Is the author affiliated with a reputable institution or organization?

2. Check the credibility of the source.

- a. Is the source (journal, book, newspaper, periodical, website, etc.) a reputable one?
- b. Is the title recognizable as scholarly or popular? See <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill20.html> for assistance in demarcating these types of journals.
- c. When was the source published? Is it relatively timely (current or out-of-date)?
- d. Is the source a first edition, revision, etc.?
- e. Is the Publisher of the source reputable (University Press, Mass-producing publisher)?

3. Check the credibility of the content of the source.

- a. Is the information in the source fact, opinion, or propaganda?
- b. Does the information seem to be valid, well-researched, and thus credible?
- c. Is the information questionable or unsupported with evidence?
- d. Is the evidence used to support the source's thesis/claims sufficient and successful, or does it leave gaps?
- e. Are the ideas and arguments similar to those presented in other credible sources on the same topic?
- f. Is the source free from bias, or is the author up front about their bias?
- g. Does the source address its apparent audience and purpose?

4. Check the effectiveness of the writing.

- a. Is the source organized logically?
- b. Are the main points clearly presented (headings, etc.)?
- c. Is the text easy to read or is it stilted and overwritten?
- d. Is the overall access to information fairly simple?