

EVALUATING INTERNET SOURCES

Not all sources are equally adequate! Evaluate your sources according to the following criteria. Problems within and across criteria should be kept in mind when deciding if and/or how to use sources. For example, knowing the bias of an author helps you to translate the information but doesn't necessitate throwing out the source; however, an extremely biased source with sweeping generalizations may require that you not include such a source. Note that not all actions must be performed under each criterion to conduct a thorough evaluation of a source. Consider as many as you can, depending on which apply to your source. Check the last criterion first, or you may have to go back to the drawing board! Draw a conclusion at the end of your evaluation about the adequacy of the site.

(A) ACCURACY: You are doing well evaluating accuracy of a source if you are:

- locating ways to verify the accuracy of the information (e.g., reference list or other knowledge that you have)
- evaluating whether information is specific enough to verify
- analyzing the logic of the author's analysis
- determining whether the conclusion flows from the analysis or material
- research study: is the author tapping what he/she intended to (validity)?

(B) AUTHORITY: You are doing well evaluating authority of a site if you are:

- finding the author as listed on the site or its links
- describing the qualifications of the author as listed on the site or its links

(C) OBJECTIVITY: You are doing well evaluating objectivity of a site if you are:

- articulating the goals and aims of the persons or groups presenting the material on the site, and placing those in context (i.e., are the goals or aims serving to add to knowledge on the subject?)
- detecting whether a bias colors the analysis or whether the author is on a soapbox (e.g., one-sided analysis or heavy dependence on emotional language and terms)

(D) CURRENCY: You are doing well evaluating currency of a site if you are:

- locating the dates when the site is last updated
- concluding whether currency of the information is relevant to the question

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(E) COVERAGE: You are doing well evaluating coverage on the site if you are:

- locating background material for the information
- concluding to what depth the author is exploring the topic
- determining how thorough the description and/or analysis is
- analyzing whether the design and sampling in a research study are suitable for the question
- deciding whether there is enough evidence to support the generalizations or main points
- evaluating whether the conclusion can be made on the basis of the material presented

(F) EASE OF NAVIGATION: You are doing well evaluating navigability of the site if you are:

- able to get around the site and its internal links fairly easily: are there clear and prominent icons on the home page to internal links? is there a search function for finding what you need on the site?
- determining if the site and its links are organized in a logical fashion

(G) RELEVANCE: You are doing well evaluating relevance of the site if you are:

- deciding whether the site is relevant to your assignment or objective--remember, that the site is looking at some aspect of inequality
- concluding whether or not the site material helps you to analyze your topic or make a point that supports your thesis