

Evaluating Information Packages

What criteria should you use to judge information sources?

Initial appraisal: First, look at the author, the publisher, and the date of publication.

Content analysis: Always back up your initial findings by looking at the content, the audience, objectiveness, coverage and style.

Who ...is the author/publisher?	What ...about the content, context, style, structure, accuracy?	When ...was the information published?	Where ...else can the information be found?	Why ...was the information provided?
Credentials...affiliation... sponsorship?	Are any conclusions offered? What evidence are conclusions based on?	Publication or copyright date?	Is the information authentic?	What are the perspectives, assumptions, and biases of whoever is responsible for the information?
How objective, reliable, and authoritative are they?	What is implied by the content?	Is the info in its original form or has it been revised to reflect changes in knowledge?	Is the info unique or has it been copied?	Is the material presented as fact or opinion?
Have they written other articles or books?	How reliable and free from error (typos, facts, concepts) is the information?	Is the information timely and is it updated regularly?	Is supporting material (bibliographies, indexes, charts, maps, etc.) included and correctly attributed?	Who is the intended audience?
Is there contact information?	Are diverse perspectives represented?			Is anything being sold?
Does the publisher specialize in certain types or fields of information?	Is the content relevant to your information needs?			
Is the publisher scholarly? Commercial? Vanity? Government?				

	Journals	Magazines	Newspapers	Internet & Websites
<u>Audience:</u> Who is the target audience? Who will read the publication?				
<u>Authors:</u> Who writes for the publication? What are their credentials?				
<u>References & Citations:</u> Are they present? Can you trace the sources?				
<u>Publication's Purpose:</u> Why is this source published? News? Scholarly exchange? Entertainment?				
<u>Information Coverage:</u> Is information recent? Historical?				
<u>Physical Description:</u> Are advertisements present? Charts? References? Lots of color or black & white?				
<u>Scholarly:</u> Is the source scholarly? Would you trust it to cite it in a research paper?				