

Evaluating Information Sources



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Evaluating Sources



HOW TO FIND CREDIBLE SOURCES FOR ASSIGNMENT RESEARCH



**USE A
ACADEMIC
DATABASES**



**CHECK
THE
AUTHOR**



**EVALUATE
CURRENCY**



**ASSESS
BIAS**

Evaluating Nursing & Medical Databases

- **CINAHL Ultimate:** The definitive resource for nursing and allied health research which covers more than 50 nursing specialties including quick lessons and evidence-based care sheets with CEU modules and research instruments
- **Cochrane Library:** Evidence-based research to inform healthcare decision making. Collection of databases including the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews and Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials
- **ProQuest:** Nursing & Allied Health Databases
- **PsycInfo:** Indexes psychological literature
- **PubMed (Medline):** Free government database for all things medical

Content vs. Context

Content

- What does it say? What is the main point or argument? Relevance to the topic? What new information, facts, or opinions does it include?
- Where was it found? Where was it published?
- When was it written? Has information changed over time?
- Who created the information? What are the author's credentials?
- What is the purpose of the source: to inform, persuade, or entertain?
- How does it incorporate data or evidence?

Context

- What is the audience for the sources? Does it assume previous knowledge?
- Where can other information on this topic be found?
- When was this information last updated? Has it been revised, redacted, or challenged?
- Who is missing from the conversation?
- How was this information found?

Determining Credible Sources

- Credibility: Sources must provide reliable information
- Author: Check to see if the source is written by a respected author who cites information to verify accuracy
- Recency: Ensure the source is current
- Author's Purpose: Determine if the author presents a neutral view or advocates for a specific viewpoint

Evaluating Citations

Currency	Was this source posted within the last six months? Does this source need to be recent to be valid?	
Relevance	Does this information connect to the research? Who was this information written to be read by?	
Authority	Who is the author of this information? Does this author have the authority to speak on this topic?	
Accuracy	Is this information supported by evidence? Is there another source that includes the same information?	
Purpose	Is the information objective or does it show bias? Is this information to inform, teach, sell, entertain, or persuade?	
Should I include this source in my research?		

Bias vs. Agenda

Bias - focused on the actions of people

- **Authority Bias:** Giving greater credibility to information or opinions provided by authority figures or experts without supporting evidence.
- **Selection Bias:** Choosing data that is not representative of a complete data set or reflective of additional sources.
- **Implicit Bias:** Unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that influence decision and judgments about people or ideas.
- **Framing Bias:** Accepting information based on how it is worded, not on the content.
- **Confirmation Bias:** Favoring information that supports pre-existing beliefs or values, while ignoring contradictory evidence.

Agenda - motivations of a group or organization

- **Politics:** Advocating for policy changes or supporting specific ideologies.
- **Economics:** Promoting products, services, or financial interests.
- **Societal:** Raising awareness or promoting certain social causes.
- **Academic:** Seeking recognition, funding, or publication within a scholarly field

CRAAP Test

C	Currency: <i>The timeliness of the information.</i> • When was the information published or posted? Revised or updated? • Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?
R	Relevance: <i>The importance of the information for your needs.</i> • Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question? • Who is the intended audience? / an appropriate level?
A	Authority: <i>The source of the information.</i> • Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor? • What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations? • Is the author qualified to write on the topic? / contact information?
A	Accuracy: <i>The reliability, truthfulness and correctness of the content.</i> • Where does the information come from? / supported by evidence? • Has the information been reviewed or refereed? • Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
P	Purpose: <i>The reason the information exists.</i> • What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade? • Does the point of view appear objective and impartial? • Are there political, religious, institutional or personal biases?

S

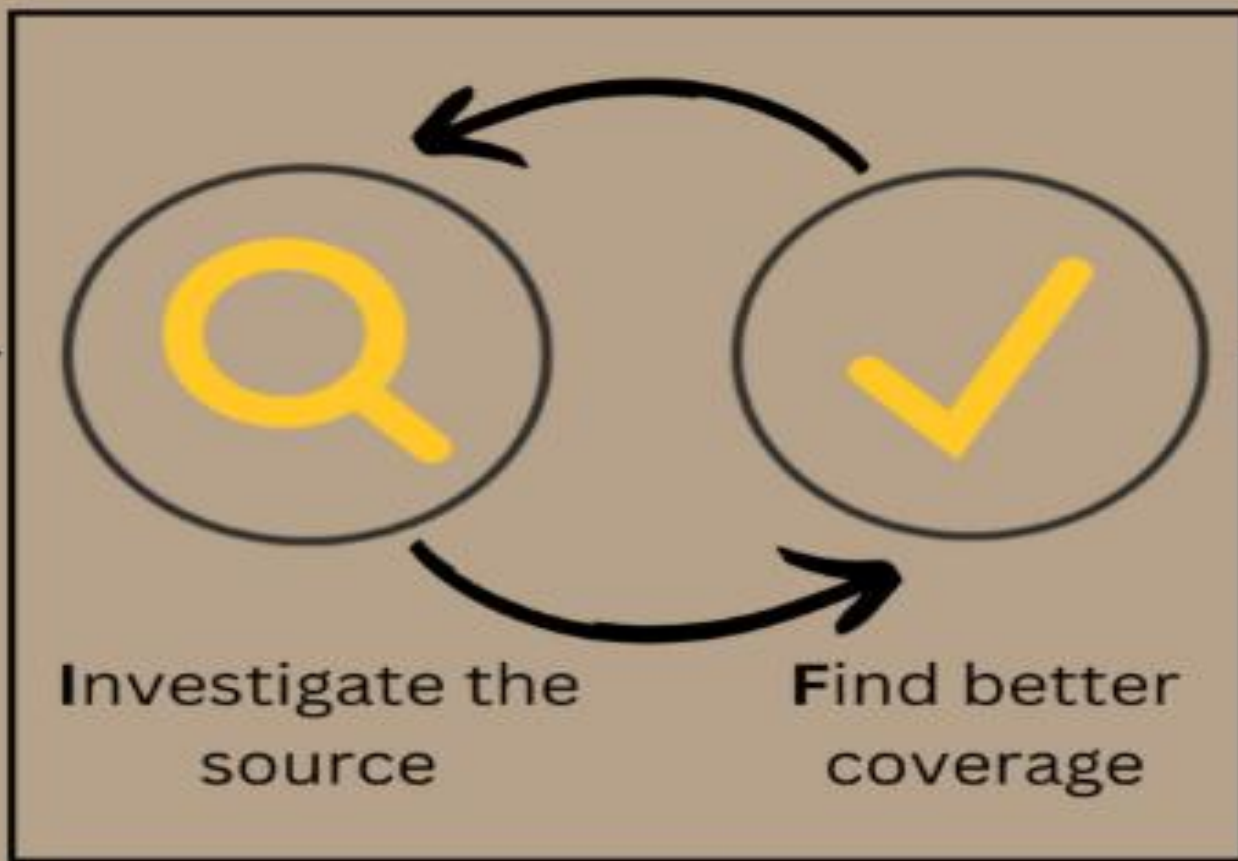
I

F

T



Stop



**Investigate the
source**

**Find better
coverage**



**Trace claims,
quotes and
media to the
original context**

Identifying CREDIBLE sources for your writing



publication process

types of literature

PEER-REVIEWED

Primary and secondary sources go through a rigorous review process where anonymous experts in the field read, critique and edit the work before it can be published. They are removed from the literature (redacted) if they are later found to be false.



1°

PRIMARY - Scientific papers

Written by the scientists who did the research. Check for methods and results if you aren't sure!



2°

SECONDARY - Literature reviews

Written by experts who compile information from primary sources. These are handy when you want to get up to speed on a subject.



3°

TERTIARY - Text books & manuals

Written using primary and secondary literature and are typically aimed at a general audience for educational purposes.

FACT-CHECKED

Tertiary sources are not peer-reviewed in the same way that primary and secondary are, but they are rigorously fact-checked and reviewed before publishing.



G

GREY LITERATURE - Reports etc.

Materials published outside of commercial peer-review journals, like university resources, unpublished theses, government reports and fact sheets.

NOT PEER-REVIEWED

Use with caution!

Grey literature can be useful if it is from a reliable source, but always double check against primary sources. If your source is Wikipedia or another website, find a primary source and cite that instead.



W

WEB RESOURCES - Wikipedia etc.

There are no standards holding these sources to the truth and can be written by anyone. Find a better source!

Evaluating Websites

1

Authority



- Who is the author or creator of the website, and what are their qualifications or credentials?
- Is there clear contact information or an affiliation with a reputable institution or organization?
- Does the website provide evidence of the author's expertise, such as related publications or professional background?

2

Purpose



- What is the primary goal of the website (to inform, persuade, entertain, sell)?
- Is the content tailored to a specific audience, such as academics, professionals, or the general public?
- How well does the site stick to its stated or apparent purpose, and how does this affect the information presented?

3

Coverage



- Does the site claim comprehensive coverage of its topic, or is it more selective in nature?
- How in-depth does the website go into its chosen subject matter?
- Does the site compare favorably in its coverage of the topic when viewed against other similar websites?

4

Currency



- When was the information published or last updated on the site?
- Are there indications that the content is regularly maintained and updated?
- Do the links on the site work, and do they lead to current and active pages?

5

Objectivity



- Does the site present information in a balanced manner, or is there a noticeable bias?
- Are different viewpoints and perspectives represented, or does the content seem to push a specific agenda?
- If the site includes advertising, does it interfere with or influence the content in any way?

6

Accuracy



- Does the site provide sources or references for its information, allowing for verification?
- Are there factual errors, inconsistencies, or unverified claims presented in the content?
- Does the website adhere to basic standards of grammar and spelling, which can often reflect the care taken in preparing the content?

The Four Ws Model

- **Who created this information?**
 - Is it created by an institution, professional association or organization, for-profit company, government?
 - What are the qualifications of the content creators?
 - Check for an "about us" or "bio" section.
- **What is the purpose of this information?**
 - Who is the intended audience?
 - For websites, what is the site set up for?
 - How is the content paid for?
- **Where does the information in this source come from?**
 - Are there citations for information and research presented as fact?
 - Are methods provided for data or research materials presented?
- **When was the information last updated?**
 - Does the content or website itself show when it was last updated?
 - How current is the information or research cited?

Evaluating Sources Checklist

Authority

- Name of author, group, or editor clearly displayed
- Link to author's credentials (e.g., job title, place of work, education, and areas of expertise, list of other publications etc.)
- Peer review process (editorial review, advisory board approval or quality control)
- Name of publisher or reputable organization
- Work is well-written, error-free publication, and easily navigated

Purpose

- Explanation of why this work was published
- No advertisements
- Avoid opinions or attempts to persuade
- No attempts to be funny or satirical

Accuracy and Verifiability

- Sources of information (bibliography, footnotes, or links to other works through quotations and summaries of sources)
- Author and publisher's contact information is clearly listed
- Source appears well-researched and factual