

EVALUATING SOURCES

You've been assigned a research paper. You know your topic, but how do you know what sources to use? This will give you some criteria for evaluating sources.

What is a primary source?

Original documents, artifacts, or data; firsthand information from a person who was present at the time. Ex diaries, speeches, letters, official records, direct observations.

What is a secondary source?

A secondhand account of the events witnessed or sources produced by another person. Ex: encyclopedias. Most of your sources will likely be secondary.

Authority

Who is the author? Are they well known? What are their credentials? Do they have the proper expertise to write on this topic? Are they biased?

Reliability

Are the facts presented accurate? Or are they distorted, or taken out of context? What sources did the author use?

Credibility

Is the author trustworthy? Are they fair and respectful to opposing viewpoints? What is their angle of vision?

Objectivity

What is the source's purpose? Do they declare a specific point of view? Is the author or website affiliated with a specific sponsor or organization? Is there a specific audience?

Coverage

Is there enough detail and background information provided about the topic? Is sufficient evidence provided to support the ideas or opinions given?

Currency

When was the source published? Has it been updated lately? Is the information current, or at least still relevant? If a website, are the links live?

Avoid Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias is the tendency to only accept information that supports our opinion and ignore information that doesn't. As a scholar, you **MUST** consider all viewpoints.

Source

Ramage, John D., John C. Bean, and June Johnson. *The Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing*. 6th ed. Pearson, 2012.