

Assessing the Credibility of Sources

DIRECTIONS: Whether you use first or secondhand sources, or a combination of the two, your sources must be credible. Answer each question below on the lines to evaluate your sources.

Who is the author? Is he or she respected in their field? Do they cite sources so you can verify that what they have written is correct?

YOUR EVALUATION: _____



How current is the source? The importance of having current sources will depend to some extent on the topic of your research. Choose current sources if you are researching things that are experiencing rapid and continual changes, like legal precedent.

YOUR EVALUATION: _____

What is the author's purpose? Is the author objective in presenting information, or does he or she want to convince you to take a particular point of view? Who funded the research or writing? For example, you should probably be suspicious of a study funded by the National Soda Pop Foundation "proving" that soda pop is a health food. A source doesn't have to be objective to be credible; but you should be aware of the author's purpose and point of view in writing the material.

YOUR EVALUATION: _____

Consider the type of sources that your audience will value. What kinds of sources does your audience consult when they are seeking out information on their own? If you are using sources that they are likely to find credible, they will find you more credible. Before using a web site as a source, you should be able to verify that the author is respected, or is part of a reputable university, media outlet, government program or well-known non-governmental organization (NGO). Avoid sites like Wikipedia, since anyone can add or change content, and you have no way to verify whether or not what you are reading is correct.

YOUR EVALUATION: _____
