Evaluating Resources
Finding the right source to fit your needs

Some questions to ask yourself *before* beginning research:

1. **What is the assignment?**
   Are there specific types of information (articles, books, websites) that you’re required to use?

2. **How broad or narrow is your information need?**
   In-depth research can often require many different types of resources, from different sources.

3. **How much do you know about your topic?**
   If you’re just beginning your research on a topic, general reference sources like encyclopedias or the Credo Reference database can be especially helpful.

Once You Have Located a Potential Source...

The two basic questions to ask yourself:

1. **Is it credible?**
   - **Who** is the author? What are their credentials?
   - **Where** did the information come from? Are there citations?
   - **Where** is the source published?
   - **What** are the author’s intentions? Is it an opinion piece? Is it biased?
   - **How** does it look? Websites without a professional layout are generally not good sources.

2. **Is it useful?**
   - **What** information is presented? Is it accurate?
   - **When** was the source created? Is it still relevant?
   - **How** detailed or generalized is the information?
   - **What** type of source is it? Does it fit the assignment criteria?
   - **How** does the information presented compare to what you already know/have read?
   - **Why** was the article written? Make sure its intentions match your information needs.

◊ Search engine (Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.)
◊ Library database
◊ Wikipedia
◊ Library catalog
◊ Specific website (www.nytimes.com, www.bls.gov, etc.)
◊ Journal Search/Browse through Library Homepage
The steps for finding sources that are both credible and usable are very similar!

1. Weed out questionable sources before you start
   - Use the Advanced Search option to Set your search engine to only search .gov and .edu sites
   - Use the Libraries’ subscription databases, and only use peer-reviewed sources
   - Limit your results to recent publication years

2. Do background research on any periodicals you find online to make sure they print factual stories
   - Check the “About” section and copyright statements of periodical websites to find out their intentions and supporters

3. Check for citations, and then check the citations

4. Know your research needs and your intentions
   - If you’re using a source to back up your own arguments, it has to be factual
   - If you’re writing about a source (article review, opinion piece, etc.) make your intentions clear in the body of the paper

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Or check out the Library Guide: http://libraryguides.medaille.edu/websites