Study Skills 1: Finding and Evaluating Good Academic Sources

There are so many places to get information that it is important to decide if something will be a good **academic** source for your homework or final assignment. When assessing a source, you don’t have to read the whole thing to decide if you may want to use it. Instead read the first paragraph or so and use the checklist below to help you decide it this is a good academic source.

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|  | **Questions to Ask** | |
| **A**uthority | **□** | Who is the author? (this could also be an organisation, rather than a single person) |
| **□** | Check their credentials: what knowledge or skills do they have that lets you confirm they know what they’re talking about? |
| **R**eliability | **□** | Does the information appear correct? |
| **□** | Does the author tell you where they got their information from? |
| **□** | Has the information been reviewed or checked by others? |
| **R**elevance | **□** | Does the source talk about the topic clearly and effective? |
| **□** | It is up-to-date? If not, is there a good reason to use an older source? |
| **□** | Does it provide new and useful information for you? |
| **O**bjectivity | **□** | Does the author explore or acknowledge multiple points of view? |
| **□** | Are they stating mostly facts? Evidence? Opinion? – Remember opinion is fine, as long as it is supported by reliable evidence. |
| **□** | Does the headline or text try to make you scared or angry about the topic? If so, it might not be the best **academic** source. |
| **W**riting Style | **□** | Is the source well organised? (Or is it difficult to follow the author’s point?) |
| **□** | Does the text sound academic? (Or is it informal or chatty?) |
| **□** | Are the author’s points backed up by evidence and do they let you know where that evidence came from? |

If you’re not sure if something would be a good academic source, **send your tutor a message on the VLE** and they can help you evaluate the source together.