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# Questioning and Evaluating Information

Discovering

Understanding

Questioning

Referencing

Creating

Disseminating



When discovering information for your assignments there are a wide range of sources available to you. You can choose academic sources like textbooks and journals, or 'popular' sources like newspapers and websites.

Deciding which source is best for your task is the first stage of evaluating information, as different sources will have different strengths and weaknesses depending on how you are intending to use them.

You can start thinking about the characteristics of different information sources by completing our ['Know your information sources'](#) activity.



No matter what sources you choose, the next step is to evaluate the information that you have found: to ask questions of each piece of information to assess how you will use it. Through this you will develop a questioning mindset, perfect for evaluating information and critical thinking. The ability to think critically is important not just for your academic studies but also for your everyday life.

It's just as important to evaluate the information you access for general interest through social media and websites such as YouTube.



A questioning mind-set can help you to identify when information you're presented with is aiming to persuade or even mislead you (fake news)!

It's also important to be aware that information from these sources often comes to us through a ['filter bubble'](#) meaning that the information we see is a personalised subset of all the information available, tailored to what the website perceives to be our preferences and interests.

**On the other side of this sheet you will find a set of questions that you may want to think about when evaluating information. Which questions you consider will vary depending on information source you are using and the requirements of your task.**

**You can print this out and use it as a handy reference for whenever you need to evaluate a piece of information.**



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## What is it?

- What **kind** of information source is it? e.g. a textbook, an image, a website.
- Is it **relevant**? Read the introduction and conclusion to check.
- Check the **content**:
  - Is it too technical or too basic?
  - Is it scholarly or popular?
- Has the information been **checked** in any way? e.g. peer review (checked by experts in the field).
- What is the **purpose** of the information?

## Who created it?

- Is it clear **who** created it?
- **What** do you know about the **creator(s)**?
  - Are they experts in this area?
  - Who are they connected to (organisations or individuals)?
- **What else** have they produced?
- **Who** published and/or paid for the information to be created?
- **Who** is the intended **audience**?



## What's in it?

- Are statements backed up by **evidence**?
- Can you tell **where** the evidence has come from?
- Are the **conclusions in line** with what else you know on the topic?
- Is there anything **missing** that you know is important? Why might this be?
- Is it **biased**?
  - Everyone has attitudes and previous experiences which might affect their point of view.
  - Depending on your topic, biased information can still be useful but you will need to show you are aware of the bias in your analysis.

## When was it created?

- How **current** is it?
  - Check the publication date, or the 'last updated' date on a web page.
  - The importance of this will vary depending on what you need the information for.
- **How close** to the event in question was this information written? (Is it a primary or secondary source?)
- Has more **up to date** information been published on this topic?
- **Why** has this information appeared at this point in **time**?

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