

FALL 2023 FRESHMAN LIBRARY ORIENTATION EVALUATING SOURCES /// NOODLETOOLS

“Doing research is not about finding any kind of information on your topic; it’s about finding good, credible, and relevant information. An important research skill is the ability to evaluate any type of informational source.”

From *An Educator’s Guide to Information Literacy*

All sources—print books, articles from databases, free-web sites, etc.—need to be looked at critically to determine whether they’re appropriate for academic research. This is particularly important when you’re considering using a _____ site. These are some of the reasons why this is true:

- Anyone can put anything on a web page. The search results screen that links you to great information may also link you to inaccurate and misleading information.
- Most print material must go through a quality check (_____)—this is not true for many free-web sites.
- Important _____ information (author, date, etc.) that is usually easily found in a book, a magazine, or a newspaper is often impossible to find on a free-web site—and that information plays an important role in critically evaluating a source.

Thorough evaluation requires careful examination of a potential research source. The following five questions should be considered when deciding whether or not to use a particular source.

1) **Who _____ this?** Might be an expert . . . Might not . . .

- Free-web sites—look for About or Biography links.
- Print or database articles—the author will often be identified. Additional information about the person may be given as well.

2) **Who _____ this?** Knowing who the publisher (or sponsoring organization) is will often help you determine accuracy, bias, purpose, etc.

- Free-web site—is there an About Us or similar link? Can you find information about the organization on the home page? What _____ is the site (.edu, .gov, etc.)?
- Print or database articles—is this a well-known, respected publisher or publication?

3) _____ **was this written?** Knowing the purpose (to entertain, to persuade, to inform . . .) will help you determine a particular site’s appropriateness as a research source. You may choose to use a biased site—but you need to know that’s what you have.

- Free-web site—look for About, Mission, Purpose, or similar links.
- All sources—pay attention to the wording. You can often identify a _____ site just by the tone and language used.

4) _____ **was this written?** How important the date is depends on the _____. Civil War facts—not so much. Latest treatment of a disease—absolutely! And statistics? They’re meaningless without a date.

- Free-web site—look for words like copyright, _____, or revised.
- Print or database articles—the date is usually easy to find.

5) **How** _____ **is this?** Accuracy can be difficult to determine for ANY kind of source if you don't know much about the subject.

- Look at the accuracy of the spelling and grammar.
- Look for a list of _____ the author used.
- _____ what you found in other sources with what's written in the source that you're evaluating.

Evaluating isn't easy and can be frustrating when you can't find information about a source you want to use. Evaluating takes time—but it IS an important part of research. If you can't find answers to essential questions or are unsure about a source, you need to consider choosing a _____ source.

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After evaluating and selecting the best sources to use for a particular project, those sources must be clearly identified on a source page (usually called a Works _____ or Bibliography page) which will be included with the paper or project. The information about each individual source (called a _____) must be listed in a consistent way (in a certain order with proper punctuation). Although there are various formats (sets of rules) that can be used, you will most often be required to use a format called _____ for English projects here at MTHS.

The school subscribes to a program that takes care of the basic formatting of citations for you (which means you don't have to worry about which piece of information needs to be first or where to put a comma!). That program is called *NoodleTools*.

Even though the program does take care of the basic formatting for you, there are mistakes that students make when using the program. Watch out for the mistakes most frequently made like not correctly identifying the _____ of source you have or not saving citations (because this program does not _____).

Today is just a brief introduction to this program. You will work with it more when you return in Oct./Nov. for a short project—and you will continue to use it throughout your time at MTHS.