

Is this article, website or book a good resource for my research project or research paper?

You can test whether the article, website or book you found is a good resource by asking yourself the questions below. If the majority of the questions below are answered with a “yes”, then it’s likely that the resource you found is a useful one.

Clarity

Does the resource explain the key concepts of the topic in a reasonably easy to understand manner? Does the author avoid confusing the issue?

Accuracy

Is this resource free of errors or distortions of the truth?
Can the facts presented in this resource be verified in another resource?

Precision

Does this resource contain enough information to use for at least one portion of your research project or paper? Does it contain the right amount and not too much?

Relevance

Does the information found in the resource relate to your research question?
Does this resource help you answer your research question or explain the issue?

Logic

Do the parts of the resource make sense together?
Does the conclusion follow from the evidence presented?

Depth

Does this resource address the complexities of the topic?
Is there an explanation for why the topic is a complex problem?

Breadth

Does this resource cover multiple points of view?
Are dissenting points of view covered as well as dominant points of view?

Currency

Was the article published recently enough to cover the newest important developments in the topic? Is the information current?

Fairness

Does the resource cover all important viewpoints on the topic equally?
Are differing points of view treated fairly?
Does the author avoid bias toward a single point of view?

After asking yourself these questions about the information that you’re trying to decide whether or not to use, you should have a much better idea about the quality of the resource. If you still can’t decide, it’s also a great idea to think about the credentials of the author. Does the author have a PhD/MD/MBA or another credential on the topic? An expert on a topic (a PhD in a subject is a good example of an expert) is usually a better resource to learn from about that topic. Academic journals (on the web or in print) are generally better to use for academic topics as the authors are usually experts on the topic. Is there another reason that you think that the author is an expert on the topic? Why?

Ultimately, though, it is up to you to think and decide whether a resource will work for your assignment. Use the questions and concepts above to defend your choices about the resources you use to “build” your paper or project.

Acknowledgements:

This worksheet is an adaptation of the list of intellectual standards found on page 16 and 17 of *The Aspiring Thinker’s Guide to Critical Thinking* by Dr. Linda Elder and Dr. Richard Paul ©2009.

Further Reading @ the Palomar College Library

Crimes against logic : exposing the bogus arguments of politicians, priests, journalists, and other serial offenders.

Jamie Whyte. ©2005. Palomar Call No. – BC175 .W45 2005

Critical Thinking: Concepts and Tools. Dr. Richard Paul & Linda Elder. ©2009.

Palomar Call No. – LB1590.3 E434 V.2

Deception: From Ancient Empires to Internet Dating. Brooke Harrington, ed. ©2009.

Palomar Call No. – BF637 D42 D46 2009

Fallacies: The Art of Mental Trickery and Manipulation. Dr. Richard Paul & Linda Elder. ©2008.

Palomar Call No. – LB1590.3 E434 V.5

How to Detect Media Bias & Propaganda in National and World News. Dr. Richard Paul & Linda Elder. ©2008.

Palomar Call No. – LB1590.3 E434 V.12

On rumors : how falsehoods spread, why we believe them, what can be done. Cass R. Sunstein. ©2009.

Palomar Call No. – HM1241 .S85 2009

True enough : learning to live in a post-fact society. Farhad Manjoo. ©2008.

Palomar Call No. – P96 O242 U65 2008

UnSpun : finding facts in a world of disinformation. Brooks Jackson. ©2007.

Palomar Call No. – BF637 .D42 J33 2007 (Esc Ctr Library)