

Palomar College Library

How to Critically Review a Source

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Who is responsible for publishing the source?
2. What are the qualifications of the author?
3. What is the main idea of the source?
4. What type of research method was used?

1. Publisher - *Where did the source come from?*

- Was the article published in a journal, newspaper, book, website, etc.?
- What organization is responsible for publishing the journal, book, website, etc.?

2. Qualification of author(s) - *Why should you trust what the author has to say? If the author is an organization or company, what do you know about them?*

Dr. _____ is a professor/ researcher of [subject] at the University of _____.

_____ is a staff writer/ reporter/ journalist for [title of] newspaper/magazine.

_____ is a non-profit organization/ company/ government agency that does the following _____.

- A professor/researcher has a PhD or masters degree and is an expert in their field.
- A practitioner is someone who's work experience in a field makes them an expert.
- A journalist/staff writer is a generalist (writing about any current topic), not an expert.
- An organization may conduct research or disseminate knowledge to further their cause.
- A company is for-profit, and might be trying to sell something.

3. Main purpose - *What are the key points or main ideas of the source?*

This scholarly article proves _____.

This book analyzes _____.

The main point/ key idea of this source is _____.

You might note if the source has a strong bias or point of view:

- **Bias** is a point of view that is one-sided, based on opinion rather than research, and without consideration of the "sides" of an issue.
- **A viewpoint** (e.g. hypothesis or thesis) that is based in research is not biased... the research has *proven* the author's point!

The author has a biased/balanced/well-researched opinion on _____ because of _____.

4. Research Methods - *Did the author use surveys, interviews, content analysis, ethnography, experiment, or participant observation to support his or her findings?*

The author used qualitative/quantitative research methods and:

analyzed...science fiction books interviewed...women surveyed.... nurses

analyzed...newspapers from the 1800s lived with....college students