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


