

# CARS Evaluation Toolkit

When you search for information you're going to find lots of it . . . but is it accurate and reliable? You will have to determine that for yourself, and the CARS Test can help. Use the worksheet to discover if your resource is a reliable and appropriate resource. Try to only use resources that have the best **credibility, accuracy, relevance** and **support**.

## Quick Guide

**Credibility** Look for believable, well written information that is free of bias. Locate information about the author(s) and their credentials. How credible are the authors, what is their level of expertise on this particular topic?

**Accuracy** The information should be up-to-date and clear. You can confirm accuracy by locating information from a variety of sources. For websites, look for a "last updated" date.

**Relevance** The information should contribute to your knowledge on the topic you are researching. It should support your thesis or offer a substantial counter point. It should be written at a level appropriate for inclusion in your research (e.g. intended for scholars or researchers).

**Support** Other sources should support the information found. Always look for a reference list, bibliography or citations demonstrating where the information came from.



Criteria	Criteria Checklist
<b>Credibility</b>	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the author named?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the author list their credentials/institutional affiliation? Is the author associated with a reputable institution or organization? What are the values or goals of the organization?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has your instructor mentioned this author? Have you seen the author's name cited in other sources? Respected authors are cited frequently by other scholars.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do they seem qualified to write on the topic?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there any contact information for the author/ publisher/ company?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there spelling errors, grammatical errors, dead links, or other problems that indicate a lack of quality control?</li> </ul> <p>Journal Article Specific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is this a scholarly or a popular journal? This distinction is important because it indicates different levels of complexity in conveying ideas.</li> </ul> <p>Website Specific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a publishing or sponsoring organization? Is the organization an authority on the subject?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The domain location in the site address (URL) is relevant to the focus of the material, e.g., .edu for educational or research materials. Note that the domain is not necessarily a primary indicator of site content. For example, some authors post their content on blog or wiki platforms hosted by companies with .com addresses.</li> </ul>
<b>Accuracy</b>	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is it a recent publication (i.e. last 5 years)? This is important <i>unless</i> your research is historical.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the source current or out-of-date for your topic? Topic areas of continuing and rapid development, such as the sciences, demand more current information.</li> </ul> <p>Website Specific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Has it been recently revised or updated?</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance</b>	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the information relate directly to your topic and/or help to answer your research question?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the work update other sources, substantiate other materials you have read, or add new information? Does it extensively or marginally cover your topic? You should explore enough sources to obtain a variety of viewpoints.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the language seem unbiased and free of emotion?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the information fact based (not opinion)?</li> </ul> <p>What type of audience is the author addressing? Is the publication aimed at a specialized or a general audience? Is this source too basic, too technical, too advanced, or just right for your needs?</p>
<b>Support</b>	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the information supported with evidence (reference to source information)?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are sources documented with footnotes, bibliography or links?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Could you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge? Are the ideas and arguments advanced more or less in line with other works you have read on the same topic? The more radically an author departs from the views of others in the same field, the more carefully and critically you should scrutinize his or her ideas.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the purpose to inform or to teach the audience (versus to sell, persuade or entertain)? Is the information covered fact, opinion, or propaganda? It is not always easy to separate fact from opinion. Facts can usually be verified; opinions, though they may be based on factual information, evolve from the interpretation of facts. Skilled writers can make you think their interpretations are facts.</li> </ul>

## HOW TO...

### 1. Find out more information about the author:

- ✓ Search a [library database](#) or [Google Scholar](#) to identify other writings by the author.
- ✓ Search for your author in [Google Scholar](#) to see if others have cited works by your author in their own writings.
- ✓ "Google" the author to identify other writings by or about the author. Sometimes an author's participation in a conference or other professional activity can be identified in the search results.
- ✓ If available, consult an "About" page on the Web site on which the content appears to read the author's self-description. Attempt to verify some of the facts.
- ✓ If the author is affiliated with an academic institution, business, or organization, check the directory on the associated Web site to confirm the author's status.

### 2. Find out more information about a website domain:

- ✓ Visit [whois.net](#) to discover the owner of website domains if unclear.

### 3. Create your bibliographic citation as you evaluate:

- ✓ Save some work by creating your bibliographic citation while you evaluate. Many of the elements you need to cite a source are the same ones you need to evaluate its quality. If more than a few of these are missing – you may want to question the quality. Use the Library's [Citing and Referencing](#) resources to learn how to create a bibliographic citation.

Sources: [Critically Analyzing Information Sources, Evaluating Web Content](#)