Evaluating Sources: AARC

As you write your paper, learn to decide if sources will be effective for your research. When evaluating sources, keep in mind four principles: accuracy, authority, relevance and currency.

Accurate sources are well written, represent the topic correctly, and are as unbiased as possible. Some sources that are not completely objective contain accurate information, so make sure to separate the information from the bias and use these sources ethically.

When assessing your sources for authority, try to find out who wrote the source and how it was published. What constitutes authority will depend on the audience to which you are writing. By citing appropriate material in your paper, you build your own authority as a writer.

The relevance of a source is determined by how important its information is for your needs. Relevant sources can include those on your exact topic and also those on subtopics you are writing on.

Currency is an issue of timeliness. How current a source is depends on its type. Websites can be published instantly, whereas academic journals might take months, and books even years to publish.