

Evaluating Resources

No matter the types of resources, whether it be books, articles, or websites, that you use for your assignments, they should be reliable, quality sources of information.

You can evaluate the quality of a resource using RADAR.

RADAR is a framework that stands for five criteria: Rationale, Authority, Date, Accuracy, and Relevance.

Each criterion has associated questions to answer in order to critically evaluate your resource. If you find that your responses are often uncertain or “no,” you may want to consider using another resource.

Rationale refers to the reason why the resource was created. Is there a clear purpose for the information? To inform, teach, sell, entertain, or persuade? Is the information communicated from a point of view that is objective and impartial, or is the information based on clear biases such as political, ideological, cultural, religious, or institutional?

Authority refers to the source of the information - the creators, publishers, or sponsors - and questions their credibility in providing the information. First determine the author, creator, publisher, or sponsor. Are their credentials or institutional affiliations listed, and do these or other information qualify them to provide the information in your resource? Is there any contact information for the creator or the publisher? For online resources, does the website's URL reveal anything about the source? For example, .edu indicates an educational website, .org indicates a non-profit organization, and .com indicates a commercial website.

Date refers to when the resource was created, published, or last updated. Is this date recent? Is the resource up-to-date or does it include outdated information?

Accuracy refers to how reliable and truthful the information is. To determine whether the information is supported by dependable evidence, check to see if the claims can be verified by other sources or check the bibliography - what are the types of sources and how many are cited? Has the information been reviewed or refereed through a process like peer-review?

Relevance refers to how appropriate the resource is to your information needs. First, does the resource have information relevant to your topic? Are you the intended audience, or is the resource targeted at a less or much more advanced audience? Also, have you looked at a variety of resources before choosing this one as the best fit for your topic?

Keep in mind that what is reliable depends on how you intend to use the resource. Not every reliable resource will answer “yes” to all these questions, and you should always weigh the criteria to make a decision. If you're unsure whether a resource is reliable, ask your instructors or the library - they'll be sure to help!

By applying the RADAR framework, you can critically evaluate resources' reliability to ensure your successful academic research!