

Evaluating Sources

Using the 5W1H Framework

Evaluating the sources you find is essential, to ensure you are using high quality academic sources that will help you with your assignment. A framework can be a useful evaluation tool and the 5W1H framework is comprehensive. **5W1H stands for Who, What, When, Where, Why and How.** You can use this checklist to mark when you have asked and answered the appropriate question in the framework for the source that you are evaluating. This checklist is not exhaustive so you may have additional questions that occur to you during the course of your evaluation.

Who?

Who is the author?

What are their **academic credentials**? What are their qualifications?
Which university or professional organisation do they work for?

Do they have **expertise** in the topic in question?

Who is the **publisher**? Are they a reputable academic publisher?

What?

What is the purpose of the information? Does it aim to sell, entertain, persuade, inform or teach?

Is the information **useful for your assignment**? Does it help you answer the assignment question?

Is the information **objective and impartial**?

Does the information contain any **bias**? This could include, but is not limited to, political, cultural or religious bias.

When?

When was the information published? Has it been revised or updated?

Does your subject require recent sources? If so, is the information up to date and current?

Does your subject draw on older or historical sources? If so, is the information still relevant? Has the information been superseded by later research?

Where?

Where did you find the information, e.g. book, journal, website, etc.

If the information is a piece of research, where was it conducted?
Research conducted in other countries may not be applicable to the UK.

Does the information contain evidence for its argument/viewpoint?
Are there citations, a reference list, research data?

Is the information supported by other sources?

Are there mistakes in spelling and grammar?

Why?

Why are you using the information? Have you used a range of different sources?

Why was the information written? Who is the intended audience?

How?

If the information is research based, how was the research conducted?
Were the methodology, research methods and sample size appropriate?

How do you know that the source is credible?

How do you know that the author is credible?