Evaluating Sources

Who Wrote It?
• What are the credentials of the author? (Education background, personal/professional experience...)
• What else has the author written?
• What is the author's reputation?
• If this is an edited collection, what are the qualifications of the editor or the contributors?

Who Published It?
• What type of materials does the publisher normally handle?
• What is the publisher's reputation?
• Is the work self-published or on a commercial Website or developer?
• Is the work published by a subsidy or vanity press?
• Is the journal scholarly, peer-reviewed, or refereed?

Why Was It Written and Published?
• Is the author's purpose clearly stated?
• What makes it necessary and important or different from other works on the topic?
• Do other research materials cover the same information just as well or better?

For What Audience Was It Written?
Who is the intended audience?
• Specialists in the field?
• Students?
• General public?
• Educated public?
• A special group (a business group or political party, for example)?
Is it written in a way that is appropriate for its intended audience?

What Is It About?
• Is the subject as advertised?
• Is it accurate?
• Is it complete?
• Is it biased or one-sided?
• Is the information supported by other authors or researchers?
• Is it easy to understand?

Does It Succeed?
• Does it cover the necessary information?
• Is it interesting and well-written?
• Does it have appropriate illustrations and graphics (maps, tables, etc.)?
• Does it offer information not found elsewhere?
• Is it important (or interesting or entertaining) enough to justify spending the time to read it?

Look at the Book
• How is it arranged?
• Is it easy to find the information you need? (Table of contents, Chapter titles, Index....)
• Does it have a preface or introduction to explain its purpose?
• Does it provide helpful supporting materials? (Glossary, Character lists, Tables, Time lines, Maps, Illustrations...)
• Does it include references or a bibliography for additional research?

Look at the Journal Article
• How is it arranged?
• Is there a definite thesis statement?
• Is the body of the article informative?
• Is it easy to find the information you need?
• Does the author's conclusion support the thesis statement?
• Does the author include references and/or a bibliography?
• Are footnotes provided?
• Does it include helpful supporting material? (Maps, Illustrations, Photographs, Charts, Tables...)
Look at the Website

• Is the URL an educational, commercial, or government site or an individual’s homepage?
• Does the site or page give author information?
• Is it kept current and is the information timely?
• When was it last updated?
• Is the information credible and reliable?
• Does the site have a biased opinion or promote a specific viewpoint?
• Does it sell products?
• Does the site offer an email address or FAQ page, if you have questions or reservations about the content?
• Does it document or copyright the material?
• Is it easy to find the information you need?