**Is This a Good Source?**

**Authority:**

* Can you find the name of the person or group who wrote the source?
* Can you find information, from another reliable source, relating to the author?
* Does the author have the qualifications to write on this subject? (In other words, I don’t want a professional dog groomer writing an article on human vaccines. That is, unless the dog groomer has a PhD in a related research field.)
* What does the author have to gain by writing this article? (Were they being paid by a company making a related product? Do they have political motives? etc.)
* Is the site, book, magazine, etc. where the source was originally published reputable? Some sites/publications are known to make up fake stories in order to get more readers (think about those “newspapers” they sell near the grocery checkout lanes). These sites/publications are not reputable. While Wikipedia is not considered to be consistently reliable, an interesting list of sources and reliability ratings is available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reliable\_sources/Perennial\_sources](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3AReliable_sources/Perennial_sources) . While this should not serve as a final-determination of publication reliability; it does provide an interesting summary of source reliability.
* Does the source appear to be quickly written (punctuation, spelling, and construction errors); or, does it read well and appear to be “polished.” Foreign intelligence services, “spies,” often post lies on various web sites (X, Facebook, Tiktok, YouTube, etc.). One hint that the article you are reading may have been written by someone outside the United States is that the wording is awkward, or has multiple mistakes.

**Purpose:**

* Does the source or site seem to be trying to sell you something? If so, this is likely not a reliable source.
* Does the source stay away from opinion, and mostly present verifiable information? Opinion-based sources often are biased in some way.
* Is the source informational or for entertainment? Many movies have been made about real people; however, stories that never happened to these people are added in order to make the movie more entertaining. Thus, movies made for entertainment are not good sources of information. However, a documentary may be a good source of information.

**Accuracy:**

* Does your source have appropriate documentation (footnotes, bibliography, end notes, etc.)?
* Can you check the author’s sources, to make sure that they exist and they actually back-up the author? Artificial Intelligence has been known to make-up sources or to misinterpret information from real sources.

**Currency:**

* Is your source current? Does it have a date of publication? Twenty-year-old sources are likely good for understanding the basic biology of a tree. However, sources from twenty years ago may be far behind the current reality of vaccine production and current disease trends.

**Credibility:**

* If a book is published, with a nice bibliography, is very “polished,” and very recent, it may still be a poor source. You must read **and think about what you are reading!** There are a number of web sites, books, and other sources claiming that the world is flat. As this is simply not true, these works can not be used as credible sources.

Source analysis questions adapted for elementary schools from “The MLA Style Center: Teaching Resources,” Modern Language Association.