| Rationale | The author’s rationale for creating the source is important to assess. An author’s motives can tell us a lot about the value of a source. |
| Authority | Authority explores the expertise and credibility of the author or organization who created the source. Authors with expert credentials and good reputations are more reliable. If no author or organization is listed, that is often a bad sign. |
| Date | Date refers to the publication date, creation date, or the most recent updated date. Sources with no date listed are problematic because we cannot tell if things have changed since they were created. Older sources are fine for some assignments but could be very problematic for others. |
| Accuracy | Accuracy is important when judging the quality of a source. We want sources with verifiable facts, no guesses, and no mistakes like spelling or grammatical errors. |
| Relevance | It is important to find information that is not only credible and accurate, but useful to you for your assignment. Relevant information will support your position or help explore your topic. |

- What purpose does this information serve?
- Why was this source created: to sell or advertise something, inform, present new research, explore an author or piece of literature?
- Is the source an advertisement or marketing something?
- Is there an apparent bias, emotional language, or hyperbole?
- Are alternative viewpoints presented?
- Is there a personal or corporate author listed?
- Is the author an expert on your topic or a credible journalist?
- What gives the author authority? Credentials, education, reputation, affiliation with an organization, governmental agency, or university?
- Is the organization or publisher responsible for disseminating the source reputable?
- Can you find information about the author?
- Is the author or the source cited by other authors or sources?
- Is there a date listed?
- When was the source published or last updated?
- Are the links included operational?
- Are the references listed obsolete?
- Has your topic changed since the source was published or last updated?
- Where is your topic in the information cycle?
- Are there errors or statements you know to be false?
- Are references included?
- Does the source have a professional appearance?
- Do other sources support the information presented?
- Is the source peer-reviewed?
- Was the source reviewed by an editor or subject expert?
- Does the information answer your research question?
- Is the source closely related to your topic?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the source so scientific or full of jargon that you do not understand much of it?
- Is the source appropriate for college-level coursework?
- Does the source meet the requirements for your assignment? (Date, scholarly, peer-reviewed)

Adapted from: