# Evaluating Sources with the Five Ws

Often finding information is less of a problem than figuring out whether that information will be appropriate for your project.

One way to decide whether a source is "good" for your project or not is to begin by asking some questions about the source.

Remember! **Evaluation is a holistic process**. One of these questions isn't enough to determine a source's usefulness. You need to take them all into account.

## WHO created the source?
- What expertise does the author/organization have to write on this topic?

- What are their credentials? How are they connected to the field they are writing about?

- Are they affiliated with any specific organizations? Which ones? Could this impact their reliability?

## WHAT is the purpose of the source?
- What is the source saying about your topic? What points or argument is it making?

- Does the point of view appear to be objective or does it appear to be strongly biased? Is the author writing from personal experience or interviewing others?

- Is the source informing? Selling? Entertaining? Persuading?

## WHERE was the source published?
- What type of publication is the source published in? Scholarly/academic? Newspaper? Magazine? Trade? Report? Something else?

- Who is the intended audience for the source?

- Are there references within or at the end of the source? What types of other sources are cited?

## WHEN was the source published?
- Does your topic require very recent information, or will older sources be acceptable or even preferred?

- Are there any historical events connected to your topic? When was the source published in relation to those events?

- If no date is provided how might this impact the reliability or usefulness of the information in this source?

## WHY is this source useful to you?
- Does the information in the source help to answer your research question or develop your argument?

- How does this information inform your research? How will you use this information in your project?

- Is the source written at an appropriate level for your needs (i.e. not too simplistic/not too advanced)?