EVALUATING SOURCES

Authority
A stands for "authority," or the expertise and credibility of a source's creator and/or publisher. When evaluating information, ask questions about the person or people behind it. Information authorities should have experience or qualifications related to what they are writing about. For example, academic subject expertise, journalistic experience, holding a public office, or being present for a historic event are all ways someone might become an authority on a specific topic. When evaluating authority, don't be afraid to do outside research!

Bias
B stands for "bias," or the perspective or slant an information creator has about a topic. When evaluating a source, ask questions about its purpose. Is the author trying to persuade you to believe a specific viewpoint, or buy something? Does the author acknowledge multiple perspectives may exist on their topic? Does the author present their individual experiences as general facts? Information is rarely free from bias. Think about how an author's biases might impact the way they cover a topic or present their argument. Be careful not to present someone's opinion as objective evidence.

Currency
C stands for "currency," or how current a source of information is relative to the topics it is covering. For many topics, outdated information can be inaccurate or even harmful! When evaluating an information source, look for a date of publication or when it was last updated. If a source is older, ask yourself if any new developments or current events may have impacted the accuracy of the information. Additionally, be careful of undated sources; it can be difficult to establish their currency.

Documentation
D stands for "documentation," or the process by which information creators back up their arguments and assertions with evidence. When evaluating an information source, look for formal or informal citations in the form of a bibliography or works cited, or in-text citations or links. If an author does not cite sources, investigate whether the publication uses a fact-checking or peer-review process before publication. Solid evidence is usually well-documented with citations, a thorough editorial process, or original empirical research and scientific process.

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