Checklist to assess source credibility

When you are researching evidence to include in your review, it is important to try and find credible sources of information for inclusion, be it scholarly material such as journal articles or books, or other sources.

The evidence you identify to answer your review question might include a variety of sources such as peer-review journals, books, webpages and magazines and newspapers.

When including any material in your review, it is important not only to consider the source’s credibility and authenticity, as well as its applicability to helping answer your review’s question; but also, the reliability of the information it contains.

Table 1 highlights some factors you might want to consider about the sources of evidence you are thinking about including in your review.

**Table 1. Factors consider about the sources of evidence to include in your review**

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| --- | --- |
| Source | Factors to consider |
| Journals | Considered scholarly publications. Intended for a specialist audience including researchers, academics, students and topic experts. Also referred to as peer-reviewed, or refereed sources. Things to consider include:  ● Does the journal provide contact details and information about the journal, e.g., who is the chief editor?  ● Is the journal associated with an institution or society?  ● Are details about the journal’s policies, licenses and copyright terms available?  ● Is the journal’s website up-to-date and is it linked with any organisation with a specific agenda?  ● Are the journal’s metrics, e.g., its impact factor available?  ● Is the journal indexed and abstracted in a reputable database such as MEDLINE? |
| Books | Also considered as scholarly publications. Things to consider include:  ● Who wrote the book?  ● Is the author a topic expert?  ● Are contributors to book chapters topic experts?  ● What is the author’s institutional affiliation?  ● Does the author have other publications?  ● Will the publisher benefit from the research or argument presented in the book?  ● Is the book out-of-date? Has other material superseded it? |
| Webpages | Online searching is a popular and convenient method of finding information. Things to consider include the RADAR mnemonic (Mendalios, 2013):  ● Relevance. How did you find the website? Is it cited in a scholarly source? Is it linked from a reputable site?  ● Authority: Is there a name, email address, or an ‘about us’ or ‘contact us’ option to determine who created the site? Is there information on the funding source, and the focus of the organisation hosting the website?  ● Date: When was the page created? Is the information on the website up-to-date? When was it last updated? Are the links current and functional?  ● Appearance: Is the information presented factual? Is the language formal or academic? How does it compare to other information you have read on the topic? Are references or links to cited material included?  ● Reason: Is the domain a trustworthy source, e.g., government sites with the domain .gov, educational sites with the domain .edu, advocacies for organisations with the domain .org? Is the information on the topic prejudiced or distorted in any way? |
| Newspapers and magazines | Popular and easily accessible sources of information. Things to consider include:  ● Who wrote the article? Often written by expert writers, e.g., journalists; who are not topic experts  ● Who is the article intended for? Might be written in a general manner using popular/layperson language and for a specific audience, might have ‘spin’ (biased interpretation)  ● How is the article presented? Do not necessarily follow a specific writing format  ● What evidence is the piece based on? Seldom referenced |

Mandalios, J. (2013). RADAR: An approach for helping students evaluate Internet sources. Journal of Information Science 39(4), 470-478. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551513478889