

Cheatsheet for Evaluating Evidence: Basic Source Analysis

WHO Who is the author? What is their expertise?

WHAT What are the major assertions of the article?

WHERE Where was it published, and how reliable is that media?

WHEN When was it published? Is it out-of-date, or breaking news?

HOW How did the author get the information? Are sources cited?

WHY What is the bias or motivation behind the publication?

Cheatsheet for Evaluating Evidence: Reliable Source Checklist

- WHO**
- The author is named.
 - The author's credentials or affiliation can be verified.
 - The author is transparent about any bias or conflicts of interest.
 - The author is an expert in the field, or interviews experts.
 - The source was peer-reviewed or vetted by experts.
- WHAT**
- The headline is justified by the story.
 - The article use facts and reasoning, not emotional manipulation.
 - Arguments are logical and they support the assertions.
 - The article acknowledges competing arguments and unknowns.
 - The information is consistent with other trustworthy sources.
- WHERE**
- The source is a generally reliable publisher or news source.
 - The article is definitely not satire or a joke.
 - The URL looks official, with no typos, and not spoofing another site.
 - The piece is a news article, not an opinion piece.
- WHEN**
- The piece has a publication date.
 - It was not published on April 1st. (April Fools!)
 - The article is recent (or historically appropriate).
 - It is not brand-new, breaking news that may be unverified.
- HOW**
- The grammar and typesetting seem professional.
 - The style is unemotional, with few exclamation points or all-caps.
 - Quotes are used appropriately, not taken out of context.
 - Images are genuine and not photoshopped.
 - Videos are not altered, selectively edited, or “deepfakes”.
 - The article cites authorities with expertise in the subject.
 - When citations are followed up, they support the source.
 - The article strives to be neutral and even-handed.
- WHY**
- The site is free from sales or money-making related to the article.
 - The site and authors have no financial incentives related to the article.
 - The site makes clear its mission and possible bias or agenda.

Cheatsheet for Evaluating Evidence: Source Comparison Chart

Source:		Source:	
Assertions	Evidence	Assertions	Evidence

Why might the sources disagree?

- Is there a lack of evidence to support some assertions?
- Is one source out of date? Or brand-new?
- Does one author have more expertise and understanding?
- Is one source simplifying or exaggerating?
- Do the sources have different biases affecting their interpretations?
- Are they emphasizing different aspects of the same information?
- Are the sets of evidence different in some critical detail?
- Do the sources have different values or agendas?
- Is one source based on more rigorous or thorough methods?