Evaluating Sources

The ability to evaluate the quality of your sources is a critical skill. You do not want sources that are outdated, unreliable, incorrect or biased.

One way to protect the integrity of your research is to consult a wide variety of sources.

1. Who is presenting it? Is the author considered reputable, credible, or an expert? Has he/she published other works in the field? Is the publisher academic, special interest, or mass market? Is it independent or closely allied to a political party or pressure group?
2. What is being presented? Is the account balanced and neutral, or highly subjective and designed to persuade rather than inform? Does the author provide clear evidence to support any claims/arguments? What connection does the author have to the material?
3. When was it first presented? Is it still accurate and relevant?
4. How is it presented? Does the book have a serious, thoughtful appearance or is it designed more for attention than balanced discussion? Are titles reasonable in tone or sweeping or inflammatory? Quality of vocabulary? Is it based on fact, opinion, or argument?
5. Why is it being presented? What appears to be the purpose of the source? Is it intended to inform or persuade? Is there a commercial intent? Is there bias or subjectivity? Could it be propaganda?