

# Finding the best information for your studies

When trying to find the best information you must:

- **Not** just use Google and accept the results that you find
- **Not** use Wikipedia as your main source of information for your studies
- Make use of information that you can **trust**. That is information which is reliable and truthful.

This leaflet is designed to help you follow these guidelines to produce the best assignments that you can!

**If you are ever struggling to find what you need just ask the Learning Centre staff.**

**They are happy to help!**

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**INTO** 

**MANCHESTER**

## **Make sure that you can trust the information that you have found!**

Whether you are using a book, newspaper, magazine or website follow the clues to work out which information you can trust.

### **Be a detective (like Sherlock Holmes)!**

Ask questions: *why? Who? When?*

### **WHY?**

#### **Why has this information been produced and published?**

**Think** about the following questions when you find a new source:

- Is the information produced by an organisation who is trying to **sell** you something?
- Are they trying to get you to believe in a particular viewpoint (so the information is *biased*)? Do they have an **agenda**?
- Has the information been written as a **joke/hoax/to steal money**? *Anyone* can set up a website so be cautious. Some are entirely fiction, e.g. <http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/>

**Think** about the style that the information is written in:

- Is it written in **formal, academic language**? This is often a good sign.
- Is it emotive?
  - ⇒ **Tabloid newspapers** often use **sensational language** (designed to attract your attention or guide your feelings). These are often poorly written and lack detail.
  - ⇒ Examples of tabloids: *The Daily Mirror, The Daily Mail, The Sun, The Metro*.
  - ⇒ Rather than tabloids, try to use **broadsheet newspapers**. Journalists here work within professional guidelines and are often more reliable and detailed.
  - ⇒ Examples of broadsheets: *The Guardian, The Financial Times, The Independent (online), and The Times*.

## **WHO?**

### **Who wrote the information? Do they have “authority”?**

Ask yourself:

- **Who** is the writer or publisher? Do you trust them? Does the writer have good subject knowledge?
  - ⇒ *E.g. are they a University professor, teacher, politician, or a business person writing in their subject area?*
  - ⇒ If it's a book check the back of the book: is there any information about the writer?
  - ⇒ Does the work have a **reading list/bibliography**? Does the writer have references to support their findings?
- Has the information been **peer reviewed**?
  - ⇒ This means that the work has been read and judged by other experts to be a valid piece of work.
  - ⇒ It is essential at university-level that you are using peer reviewed articles.

When using websites as sources, look at the **URL** to see if it is a trustworthy source:

- **.ac** or **.edu** at the end of the URL shows that it is a website from an *educational institution*.
- **.gov** at the end of a URL shows that it is a website from a *governmental institution*.
- **.org** at the end of the URL shows that it is a website from a *not-for-profit organisation or charity*.
- **.co.** or **.com** or **.net** can be *anything*. It may be a good idea to google the website to see if it has been reported as fake.

## **When?**

### **When was the book/website page written or published?**

Check the **publication date** on books, and when website pages were last updated.

It is generally a good idea to use more **recent sources**, unless you are using a *classic book* on the subject which remains important, or if older books are required for the particular needs of your assignment.

## **Remember:**

### **Why? Who? When?**

### **Use EBSCO Discovery**

The databases available in **EBSCO Discovery** are ideal for finding good information. The books and articles you will find here are **written with authority** by *academics, specialists and experts*.

Use these databases by logging into **Open Athens** through the link on our website: <http://intolearningcentre.co.uk> and going to Online and Electronic Resources.

You can also get here through **Brightspace** by going to **Online Library** then **e-Library** in the menu.

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You can find **Help Videos** and **further guides** on how to use our databases on our website or via *Learning Centre Research Skills* on **Brightspace**.

Any other questions? Just ask.

#### **Contact Us:**

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