

Know Your Sources of Information

Consider your sources as you collect information regarding any difficult issues, especially issues that involve science.

With modern technologies, it is possible to find information on virtually any topic, but the quality and usefulness of the information to which you have access will vary. It is critical that you pay attention to where information is coming from, who is behind the information (their credibility, expertise, biases, etc.), and what you can and/or should do with that information. There is no single method for documenting the credibility and reliability of information and information sources, but here are some suggested questions to explore in your analysis of any information source. Keep in mind that not all of these questions will be pertinent for all information sources.

1. Who is (or what organization or company) presenting the information?
2. What is the purpose of the publication?
3. What expertise and/or relevant experience does the author (or organization or company) have?
4. What biases does the author (or organization or company) have and how might those biases affect the presentation of information?
5. Does the information presented seem to be accurately reported? Are the claims made in the presentation supported? Do any facts or analyses seem to be distorted?
6. Does the presentation leave important information out? Does the presentation offer information that is unnecessary (particularly if the extra information distorts the message)?