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How To Identify Suitable Content Sources For An Assignment

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How To Identify Suitable Content Sources For An Assignment last modified by JOHN MUGUMYA on 22 March 2021 06:45:49 GMT

How to Identify Suitable Content Sources for an Assignment

This topic assists students of Technical Communication to critically evaluate sources of content so they can determine what is most suitable for their assignments.

We live in a digital world with access to a lot of information from very many sources. But to achieve academic success, students must use only appropriate information in their assignments. In this topic I will first list the common sources of content available to a technical communication student and after that, I propose ways of critically evaluating those sources to enable you to choose what is most suitable.

A. Find the sources

The first step in identifying suitable resources is reading each module overview where core texts and resources are listed. Your lecturers will also provide you with both required and recommended reading lists. The [books of modules website](#) is very helpful. The University [Library](#) will have most of the resources that you need but not everything. With your student account, you have full access to the library's vast collection of both print and electronic resources. There is no academic advantage in choosing either electronic or print resources. They serve the same purpose. In the library, you have access to:

- Books (including e-books).
- Academic Journals.
- Trade and Popular Journals.
- Databases.
- Research Repositories.
- Archives.
- Rare Books collection.

These are other good sources of content.

- Websites and blogs
- Newspapers
- Broadcast media
- Social Media

B. Evaluating the sources

After you have decided on the resources that you will consult, the next step is to critically evaluate those sources so that you can use only the most suitable. Evaluate your sources by conducting the six-step PROMPT checklist (The Open University 2020). PROMPT is an acronym arrived at by taking the first letter of each of the keywords in the evaluation process: **Presentation, Relevance, Objectivity, Method, Provenance, and Timeliness.**

1. PRESENTATION

If the quality of the information, in whatever format, is not good, it will diminish the quality of your assignment. Texts should be written in good grammar; images and videos must be of good quality.

2. RELEVANCE

To determine the relevance of the information, you need to fully understand the assignment brief. Consider if the information answers the questions raised by your assignment.

3. OBJECTIVITY

Consider if the information is fair and balanced. Find out if the authors are being “selective with their evidence?” (The Open University 2020). Make sure the data presents an unbiased view of the facts and that all vested interests like sponsors are identified.

4. METHOD

Consider whether a proper and meticulous study was conducted to arrive at the claims being made. Determine if the claims are grounded in research.

5. PROVENANCE

Ascertain the source of the content and if it is trustworthy. There is a lot of information online but not everything is suitable even when it looks good. Find out if it is published in a reputable [peer-reviewed](#) journal. Is the author known and respected in academia? Do they have other published works? Are there other people citing their work? If you are looking at social media, for instance, Twitter, verify it is a genuine account and not a [parody account](#). If you are looking at websites or blogs, make sure they are legitimate ones.

Read more on how to appraise [websites and blogs](#)

6. TIMELINESS

Knowledge evolves, books get updated, ideas get disproved, data get revised. Find out when the information was produced or published and if it suits your needs. Make sure your source is not outdated or out of context.

Finally, your source of content can be a book, a journal, or even a social media post. But you must critically appraise every source to determine its suitability.


Read more about evaluating sources of information [here](#) and [here](#)

References

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