Check these areas to help evaluate an information source:

Books:
- Examine the title page and the reverse side of the title page (verso). This is the authority for citing the book.
- Are credentials listed for authors/editors? Is information about the author provided? Use the library catalog and read the detailed information (called the bibliographic record) for the book to discover additional information.
- Read the preface, forward, and/or introduction to determine the purpose and scope of the book.
- Skim chapter headings and read the conclusion of a pertinent chapter and the conclusion at the end of the book.
- Check the end of chapters and back of the book; are bibliographic references provided, appendices, an index?

Articles in Journals, Magazines, Newspapers:
- What is the name of the journal, magazine or newspaper that published the article? This is the source for the article. Are author(s) listed? Credentials? Look at the publication date to determine currency, length of article, etc.
- Read the abstract (summary), if provided, to determine potential usefulness.
- Identify the subject headings (controlled vocabulary) assigned to the article in the database; this can often lead you to more information on the topic and provide ideas for additional searches.
- Are there bibliographical references listed at the end of the article?
- If article is determined to be relevant to your topic and useful, read the article.

Web Pages (articles, sections, blogs found on websites):
Ideally, much or all of the information you need to evaluate a specific web page, such as the author, host organization, and publication date, will be easily located at either the top or bottom of that page. However, you often need to explore the website on which the specific web page is located:
- You can find out about the host organization by looking at the web address (URL), especially the domain name (i.e., npr.org, cnn.com, harvard.edu, cdc.gov). There are no universal rules for which domains are good or bad, but the domain name can help you identify the host organization.
- When viewing an article on a website, the information you need to determine C.A.R. might be on a different page. Try clicking on “About...” or “Contact Us” to find additional information. You can also enter just the domain name without anything past the first slash (i.e., shorten “http://www.npr.org/sections/news/” to “npr.org”) and see what information you find from the home page of the website.
- Are there various ways to contact the author, publisher, sponsoring organization? Email, phone, mailing address?
- Are links functional? Follow links; where do they lead?
- Dates may have various meanings: dates next to article titles on a specific web page may indicate when the information was first written or when the information was last revised; dates at the bottom of the page (in the footer) may indicate the date the website as a whole was created by a design team, and might not even relate to the content of the website.

Red flags: (Do not use the information.)
- Unknown or no author and the publisher cannot be identified; article is too short to use as a relevant source of information.
- No date on the document or an old date on information known to change rapidly
- Numbers or statistics presented without an identified source for them
- Absence of source documentation when the discussion clearly needs such documentation
- You cannot find any other sources that present the same information (lack of corroboration; cannot be verified)
- Vague or sweeping generalizations; One sided view that does not acknowledge opposing views
- Intemperate tone or language ("stupid jerks," “racist screams of my extremist opponents”)
- Exaggerated claims with emotional language and the use of exclamation marks ("All teenagers are the worst drivers in Missouri; they always speed and never yield!!")

Tip: Save time by creating your bibliographic citation while you evaluate. Many of the elements you need to cite a source (author, publisher, date, etc.) are the same ones you need to evaluate its quality. If one or more elements are missing, the information source is probably not a good one to use.