Authenticity of sources

When you are searching for information for a research assignment, it is essential that you think about where your information is coming from.

Consider the following things when looking for information, whether online or in books and newspapers:

1. **The site or publisher.** Is it a reputable site with a .gov or .edu domain? Click through to the homepage and scroll through to check the site’s intentions and contact information. Is the book from a reputable publisher or was it self-published?
2. **The content.** Clickbait headlines are designed to attract attention with shock value. Read what the article actually has to say before making up your mind.
3. **Who is the author?** Are their qualifications listed? Do they work for a particular organisation?
4. **When was it published?** Is it current or outdated? Check the publication date for a book. Check for a date of publication under the headline or at the bottom of a webpage.
5. **What evidence is provided?** Does the author provide supporting information for their case? What are the sources for that information?
6. **Who is the intended audience?** Is the source catering to a particular audience? If so, have they tailored what they’re saying to fit that audience’s attitude and beliefs?
7. **Are there multiple sources for the same information?** If so, do all of them link back to a single source or are there multiple reputable sources discussing the issue?

Identifying bias

Every piece of media you consume, whether it be a TV show, a book, a Snapchat story, or a magazine article is biased in some way. It is showing one view of the world. This is why it’s important to use multiple sources for any assignment.

Make sure you consider the following things:

1. **Who is the author?** Do they work for a particular organisation with very strong opinions? How old are they? Will their ethnicity and religious affiliations change their opinion on an issue? Will their job affect their attitudes and arguments?
2. **Fact or opinion?** Does the article deal in facts or is it conveying the author’s opinion on a particular topic? Was it intended for public consumption or is it a private letter or diary?
3. **When was the resource created?** It is important to consider historical context when looking at sources. For instance, a book written in 1875 may well use racial slurs and convey attitudes towards women that are unacceptable in modern society. Think about significant events that were happening at the time and what life was like at the time the resource was created.
4. **What is excluded and why?** Think about what information is missing from your resource. If a source said that lollies are a healthy snack because they’re low in fat but didn’t mention the sugar content, think about why that information is missing. Is it to back up a particular opinion? Was the resource created by a lolly manufacturer? Or both?
5. **What images have been used?** Are the images authentic? Have they been cropped or edited to show something specific and leave out other information? Does what’s happening in the images match information in written sources?