

## **CHECKING INTERNET RESOURCES**

There is a huge amount of information available on the internet and in libraries. However, you need to be able to work out how useful and believable all of these sources of information are. Try to remember to run through the CARS checklist.

CARS stands for:

**Credibility**

**Accuracy**

**Reasonableness**

**Support**

This mnemonic should help you to check the quality of any printed or online source that you use. This should help you decide whether a source of information is high quality or low quality.

**Credibility**

This means that you have to work out how trustworthy a source is. You should think about:

- The quality of the evidence and the amount of argument about the evidence.
- Who is the author of the source? Are they believable and knowledgeable?
- Are there strong arguments used with reasons given?

**Accuracy**

If a source is accurate it will be:

- Up-to-date (recent)
- Factual
- Detailed
- Complete with no information missing

There can be some clues as to whether a source is inaccurate:

- No date on the document
- Comments that are vague or have little detail
- Sweeping use of language e.g. using words like “always”, “never” “every”, “completely”, rather than words like e.g. “sometimes”, “usually” or “tend to”.
- An old date on a source about a topic that changes all the time.
- A very one-sided view that doesn’t mention or take account of any other or opposing point of view.

## Reasonableness

If a source is reasonable it will be:

- Fair and give balance opinions or points of view
- Unexaggerated
- Thoughtful and give reasons for certain comments/opinions.

There are some clues which can show that a source is unreasonable. Does it contain:

- An inappropriate tone or language ("stupid jerks," "shrill cries of my extremist opponents")
- Over-exaggeration ("Thousands of children are murdered every day in the United States.")
- Sweeping statements of extreme importance ("This is the most important idea ever conceived!")
- Conflict of interest ("Welcome to the Old Stogie Tobacco Company Home Page. To read our report, 'Cigarettes Make You Live Longer,' click here." or "When you buy a stereo, beware of other brands that lack our patented circuitry.")

## Support

If a source is valid it will:

- List its sources of facts and information.
- Have contact information and say in the text or online that it can prove what it says/claims.
- Have other sources which agree with what it says/claims.

Some questions you should ask are:

- Where did this information come from?
- What sources did the information creator use?
- Are the sources listed?
- Is there a bibliography or other documentation?
- Does the author provide contact information in case you wish to discuss an issue or request further clarification?
- What kind of support for the information is given?
- How does the writer know this?