

Finding Reliable Sources

Using reliable information is essential to producing credible research. Before including a source in your project, take a few minutes to make sure the information is trustworthy, accurate, and appropriate for your topic.

1. Check the Author or Organization

Identify who created or published the information.

Ask yourself:

Is the author or organization clearly identified?

Do they have expertise related to the topic?

Is the source published by a reputable organization, university, government agency, or academic publication?

2. Check the Date

Look at when the information was published or last updated. For economic topics such as inflation, employment, wages, and interest rates, recent information may be especially important. Older sources can still be valuable when researching historical events, theories, or changes over time.

3. Look for Evidence

Reliable sources should support their claims with evidence.

Look for:

- Data and statistics
- Citations or references
- Links to original studies or data
- Explanations of how conclusions were reached
- Whenever possible, trace important statistics back to their original source.

4. Consider the Purpose

Think about why the source was created. Is it meant to inform, educate, persuade, advertise, or promote a particular viewpoint?

Be especially careful when a source makes strong claims without providing evidence to support them.

5. Verify the Information

Compare important information with other credible sources. If multiple independent sources provide similar information, this can increase your confidence in its accuracy. If sources disagree, look at the evidence, data, and methods each one uses.

Quick Source Check

Before using a source, ask:

Who created it?

When was it published?

What evidence supports it?

Why was it created?

Can the information be verified elsewhere?

A reliable source should provide enough information for you to understand where its claims come from and why they can be trusted.