



Kids InfoBits Toolbox - Judging Information

The **Kids InfoBits Toolbox** tip sheets are designed to help young researchers prepare a written report. This document will explain how to **judge various types of information** used to write reports.

Need more help with your report? Visit <http://solutions.cengage.com/gale-training/materials/tip-sheets/> for more **Kids InfoBits Toolbox Tip Sheets!**

Once you have decided on a topic for your report, it is time to begin gathering information about your topic. There are many different sources that you can use to find information. You are probably familiar with most of them.

Encyclopedias

Books



Magazines

Newspapers

Websites



Each source can be used to learn about your topic. But, how do you know which ones you should use? How do you know that the source you are using is giving you reliable, detailed, and up to date information?

As you look at the many sources available, you may realize that this problem is like a box of chocolates. All of the candy looks good, but you know that sometimes looks can be deceiving. Have you ever bitten into a great looking piece of chocolate candy only to realize that it is filled with icky orange filling? The same can be true with sources for a report that you are researching. It can look good at first, but then you realize that it is not as good as it looks.

Fortunately, there are some easy ways to judge the sources you find. As you consider each source you want to use, think of these three factors:

- 1) **Reliability:** How sure are you that the information is true and accurate?
- 2) **Details:** Does the resource give you a lot of information or just a little bit?
- 3) **Up to Date:** Was the information written recently or a while ago?

Reliability is how true and accurate the information is. You make judgments about reliability all the time. For example, imagine someone in your class tells you that your best friend is in the principal's office. Would you believe that person? If the person were reliable, you would believe the story. But, if the person telling you the story likes to tease you or make up stories, you probably wouldn't believe it.

Details are the extra bits of information. For example, you hear that your best friend is in the principal's office. This worries you until you hear more details. Your friend saw a little kid get hurt and helped out. The principal is thanking your friend. Those details make all the difference in the world.

Up to date means that the information that you are reading is the latest information possible. Imagine that someone tells you again that your friend was called to the principal's office. You might say that you already knew that. But, what if your friend was called to the principal's office for a second time? That means that you don't have up to date information.

Let's look at all the sources of information available for a report and consider whether they are reliable, have a lot of details, and are up to date.

Encyclopedias

Encyclopedias are usually a good place to start. Encyclopedias contain reliable information. Encyclopedia companies would go out of business if they made a lot of mistakes or made things up. Encyclopedias are reliable.

But are there a lot of details? Remember your friend in the principal's office. Do you know the whole story just from reading an encyclopedia entry? Think of it this way. Encyclopedia sets are big. They take up a lot of room on the library shelves. They also cover a lot of topics. Can one encyclopedia entry tell you everything you need to know? Also, you have to check how old the encyclopedia is. If it is an area where fast progress is being made, it probably doesn't have the latest information. You have access to an electronic encyclopedia in *Kids InfoBits: The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*. It's updated every three months!

Quick reference for Encyclopedias

Reliability ★★ ★ **Details** ★ **Up to date** ★

Books

Books are a great source of information when writing a report. Books are usually reliable and have a lot of details. For example, an encyclopedia entry about Benjamin Franklin will give you important dates about his life and his many inventions. A book about Benjamin Franklin will tell you more details about his childhood, inventions, and political career.

The one drawback of a book is that it may not have been written recently. Make sure you check the copyright date. If the book was written more than a couple of years ago, it may not contain the latest information.

You'll find information from books in *Kids InfoBits*!

Quick reference for Books

Reliability ★★ ★ **Details** ★★ ★ **Up to date** ★

Magazines

Magazines may or may not be as reliable as encyclopedias or books. One way to decide if a magazine article is accurate is to compare the information you read in the magazine to the information you have read on the same topic in an encyclopedia. If the magazine article does not have the same basic information correct, then it might not be reliable.

Magazine articles can provide only a little bit of information or a lot of details. It all depends on the magazine. Compare what you read in a magazine to what you read in the encyclopedia.

Magazines are usually more up to date than books or encyclopedias since they are printed more often.

You'll find information from magazines in *Kids InfoBits*!

Quick reference for Magazines

Reliability ★★ **Details** ★★ **Up to date** ★★

Newspapers

People depend on newspapers to tell them what is happening, so newspapers try to be as accurate as possible. But, newspaper editors and writers need to publish the paper in a hurry each day. Sometimes, mistakes can be made. Newspapers get a medium grade for reliability.

Think about the size of a newspaper article. There is probably the same number of words as an encyclopedia entry. That tells you that the articles have the basic information, but not a lot of room for many details.

Newspapers are published daily. That means the information is as up to date as possible.

You'll find information from newspapers in *Kids InfoBits*!

Quick reference for Newspapers

Reliability



Details



Up to date



Websites

If you wanted to write a book about snakes, you would have to get it approved by a publisher. A publisher decides if a book is good enough to publish. If you wanted to make a web site about snakes, there would be no one who would tell you if they thought your work was good enough. Information that you find on a web site can be written by anyone. This tells you that web sites may or may not be reliable.

Some web sites may have a lot of detail. Each web site can refer you to other web sites. Before long, you could have a lot of information.

Web sites are easy to update. Information that is posted can be very up to date. Some of the information may not be as up to date.

Kids InfoBits is used through a website but is actually made up of books, magazines, images, and newspapers so it's all trustworthy information!

Quick reference for Websites

Reliability



Details



Up to date



Need help?

You can download a worksheet to help judge information from <http://assets.cengage.com/training/JudgingInfoWksht.pdf>.

Need more help with your report? Visit <http://solutions.cengage.com/gale-training/materials/tip-sheets/> for more **Kids InfoBits Toolbox Tip Sheets!**