Evaluating Sources (UW-La Crosse Public Speaking Center)

Speakers should evaluate the information they use for their speeches based on the following criteria:

- **Source recency**: Sources should be up to date. Information changes rapidly. As a speaker, it is important to use information that reflects current knowledge of your topic.
  - Sources from peer reviewed publications should be less than five years old (with some exceptions).
  - Sources from popular press publications should be within one to two years old, depending on the topic of the article.

- **Source expertise**: Sources should have training, education, and or/experience in their topic area. For instance, a political science professor would have expertise in discussing elections.
  - Remember that expertise is limited to a specific area. A political science professor would not be an expert on biomedical ethics if they were not trained or had experience in this area.

- **Source bias**: Sources might have a particular bias based on their financial relationships (such as getting paid by a particular organization) or experience.
  - For instance, basketball great Maya Moore has a shoe contract with Nike basketball, so using her as a source comparing the quality of basketball shoes would be biased because of her financial ties to Nike.
  - Biased sources can be used, but a speaker should identify their biases in their speech.

- **Source is consistent**: Speakers should have multiple sources that support the findings of their speech arguments.
  - If one source contradicts the other sources, the speaker should conduct more research or omit the source that is inconsistent with other sources.

Handout adapted from *Communicating Effectively*