

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

Husiman, D., Berry, I., Peterson, J., Van Oss, J. (Eds.) (2019). *Communicating Effectively*. Southlake, TX. Fountainhead Press.