Handout Video SLB 5: Relevance and Reliability

No matter how good an article or book is, it is of little use to you if it cannot answer your question. The information should be *relevant* to your question. But how do you know whether found information is indeed relevant?

Let's say you are researching how sport can be used to reduce obesity among children in Amsterdam. A scholarly article about obesity among Latin American adults would be of little use to you. It is probably very well written, but it will not help you answer your question.
The content of a source should therefore be related to your question.

Additionally, check that the *quality and level* of a source match your question. When trying to answer your question research articles or reports found on websites are particularly useful. However, more generally popular magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* will be less suitable.

Finally, make sure that the information you found is *current*. Does the information still apply to the present situation? The number of schoolchildren in Amsterdam with obesity may vary from one year to the next. You should therefore try to find the most recent information.

As well as relevance, *reliability* is also important. But how can you check whether the information in an article, book, or website, is accurate?

Always check carefully who the *author* of a source is: What is his background or profession? What else has he written? Usually you can easily find this information at the top of an article, for example, or in the preface of a book. Or simply search the internet.

In the case of a book or journal, carefully check the *publisher*. Is it a significant publisher? What else do they publish? And in which field? Is it a publisher of specialist literature or do they mostly publish books for a wider audience? Magazines aimed at the general public are usually not suitable for research.

Obviously, you need to look carefully at the content. *Are the facts correct* and does the writer *show how the information was obtained*? Do you have doubts about whether something is correct or not? If so, check if you can find the same information elsewhere.

Finally, check how *objective* the information is. Commercial company websites are often less objective than those of research institutes. And, ask yourself: does it involve a personal opinion? Is it full of assumptions? Does the writer often use the word 'I'? If so, be very watchful!

In other words, look very carefully at all the information you have found. Only if the information is relevant ánd reliable can you use it for your project.

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