Assessing the Credibility of Sources

8 Quick Factors to Consider...
Is the author reputable?

What is the author’s background?
Does the person have experience in this subject matter?
What is their educational background?
Does the publisher or organization author works for have a good reputation?
Is the source current?

What is the copyright date?
(some subject areas change quickly!)
Is the date too old for your chosen subject area?
Does it look professional?

Any typos or errors?
Are there graphics and flashy colors that serve no purpose other than decoration?
Is it fact or opinion?

You want FACTS!!

If the author uses emotionally charged words, it is probably opinion (“they always,” “they never,” “stupid decision,” “it is obvious,” “right” or “wrong,” “bad” or “good”

Example:
“. . .these and other despicable acts. . .”
vs.
“. . .these and other illegal acts. . .”

(WikiHow, 2013)
Does it provide its own Bibliography or Works Cited?

Citing other sources is a sign of credibility
A credible author will give credit to his/her sources
Are there a lot of advertisements?

Sources that sell a lot of advertising space may value attracting readers & making money ahead of informing people!

If the publisher is a scholarly enterprise, they will have little, if any advertisements.
Web Sources: Does the author provide contact info?

Is there an email address or phone number available?

Author should welcome feedback and questions!
Web Sources: Does the URL have a credible domain?

Government: .gov or .mil
Educational: .edu
Non-profit: .org
Wiki-Warning

Beware of Wikipedia as a source for academic writings!

A scientific study showed that Wikipedia is as accurate as a professionally-generated encyclopedia, it is generally not credible enough for use in writings where accuracy is of extreme importance.

(BBC News, 2005)
Works Cited
