

Reliability of source materials

Before you start to read a source, ask yourself the questions in the table below. If you can answer satisfactorily more than half, it is probably worth reading, but if you can't, it may not be. And even if it is indispensable and directly relevant to your topic, read the content with these reservations in mind and, perhaps, raise them in your literature review.

Reliability of source material – checklist

Authors	Are the authors named?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are their qualifications relevant?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are they well-known authorities?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do they have other publications?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Who do they work for?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sources	Has the article been paid for?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Has it been refereed or edited?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is this a primary or secondary source?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	What references have been cited?	<input type="checkbox"/>
	How does it compare with other sources on the same subject?	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reading strategies

- 1 We read carefully **word-for-word** when we're reading a text or a passage we know is of central importance to our work, from which we want to extract in our notes the detailed structure of the main points and subsections.
- 2 In contrast, when we just want to pick up the general impression of the contents, the key ideas and the broad structure of a text or an article, we would do better to **skim** it.
- 3 And, if we're just looking for an answer to a specific question, say a date, a name, a set of figures, or what the writer says about a certain subject, we need to **scan** it.

For more information, see *How to Write Your Literature Review*, Chapter 15.