



Evaluating Sources: Source Detective

Before you trust what a website, video, or book tells you, put on your detective hat. Look for these five clues to solve the case: is this source telling the truth?

Detective: _____ Source I'm checking: _____

CLUE 1 Who wrote it?

Can you find a real name? Does that person or group know a lot about this topic – like a scientist, doctor, teacher, or reporter?

Red flag: *There's no name at all, or it just says "Anonymous."*

CLUE 2 What is it trying to do?

Is it trying to teach you true facts – or trying to sell you something, change your mind, or just make you laugh?

Red flag: *It really wants you to buy something or believe one opinion is the only right one.*

CLUE 3 When was it made?

Is the date recent enough? Some facts (like space or dinosaurs) don't change fast. Others (like "who is president") change all the time.

Red flag: *There's no date, or it's way too old for this topic.*

CLUE 4 Where does it come from?

Is it from a place people trust – like a museum, library, government website, or well-known news source? Or somewhere you've never heard of?

Red flag: *It's a random post from someone you don't know, with no real organization behind it.*

CLUE 5 Why should you believe it?

Can you find at least one or two other trustworthy sources that say the same thing?

Red flag: *You can't find this fact anywhere else – it might be made up.*



CASE CHECKLIST

Check off what you found while investigating your source:

- ☐ I found a real author or a trustworthy group.
- ☐ This source is mostly trying to inform me, not sell or trick me.
- ☐ The date works for this topic.
- ☐ It comes from a place I can trust.
- ☐ I found the same fact somewhere else too.

WHAT'S YOUR VERDICT?

1. Count your checkmarks, then find your light below.

GREEN	All 5 checked – Case closed! This source looks credible. Go ahead and use it.
YELLOW	3–4 checked – Not sure yet. Ask a teacher or librarian, or find a second source before you trust it completely.
RED	0–2 checked – Too risky. Don't use it as evidence – keep looking!