

Chapter 25. Exercises for Starting and Deepening Inquiry

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We can think about “exercises” two ways, as skill-building and as simple movement. We know that reflective writers need deliberate practice to improve: after all, writing doesn’t happen with just one big swoop of words landing on a page, but with deliberate moves and approaches assembled over time. Practicing writing shares many characteristics with other kinds of practice: like shooting free throws, drawing faces, piping frosting, calculating cosines, or identifying cells, writing practice requires guidance, focus, repetition, and connection to a larger goal. Writers gain confidence and insight when we practice particular skills, either skills we most need for our work at the moment or skills we struggle with most.

Solve writing problems reflectively

As reflective writers, we also know that when we’re stuck, we don’t have “writer’s block”—instead, we just have a problem we need to figure out. The exercises in this section are designed to support that problem-solving process. They can help writers DEAL with being stuck, by



- Defining a problem,
- Exploring some options for addressing it,

- Acting by trying out a new approach for 20 minutes or so, and
- Learning how to apply that new idea where it's helpful.

When we take deliberate, reflective, writing-focused action (rather than checking our messages or staring at the cursor blinking on the screen), we can lower our stress, gain a fresh perspective or increased energy, and move forward to new and productive insights.

Avoid high expectations

Practice may “make perfect,” but practice work should never strive to *be* perfect. When you exercise as a writer, try to ignore small errors in word choice or punctuation, and try not to worry about whether you're getting the “right” answers. Just keep writing answers.

Practice persistence

You need to persist in a single exercise long enough to prompt your brain to release or create ideas you weren't aware you had. You might set a timer, and work as hard as you can for 20 or 30 minutes. You also need to persist across time, whether you repeat the same exercise multiple times or engage in different exercises at multiple points during a writing project.

Whether you use these exercises to strengthen your skills or to build more flexible processes, you can improve your current project and gain more fluency as a writer overall.

25.1 Cousin Topics

Define your goal

Use this exercise to explore avenues of inquiry that might lead to relevant source material, parallel case evidence, or unexpected insights.

Background

A cousin is a relative who is often at a similar level in a genealogical family tree, but on a separate branch; a cousin *topic* is an area of inquiry that has parallels to your own but draws on a separate “branch” of scholarship and/or experience. If you are inquiring about cameras in your town that identify speeding cars, then cousin topics could branch off from any of those key phrases to include other tools for identifying speeding cars; other towns with similar cameras; cameras that identify other vehicle infractions such as stoplight violations; and cameras that identify wrongdoing by people in boats or on foot.



Take action

Vary the parts: Write a sentence or two that describe your area of inquiry, and then circle or box the key words or phrases in it. For each key phrase, write a sentence describing a new area of inquiry, as in the example above, that changes the key phrase. If you can think of more than one way to change the key phrase, write more than one sentence per phrase.

Vary the core elements: Consider any of the “reporters’ questions” that your key words haven’t already pushed you to reconsider: *Who else*—people who are older/younger, in a different field or profession, with more or less power or money—might be experiencing a similar problem? *Where else*—in a different community, state, or nation—are people experiencing similar challenges? *When else*—three years ago? ten? fifty?—did people encounter a problem that shares common elements with yours? *How else*—with different tools, laws, systems, agreements—have people approached a challenge like this one? Write yourself some more sentences describing other possible cousin topics.

Consider the complications: A stoplight camera is not exactly the same thing as a speed-limit camera, and people who support one may not support the other. Write a few sentences explaining specifically how two cousin topics are alike, and how they are different from one another, so that you can think about how helpful the ideas from the cousin topic will be in considering your main issue.

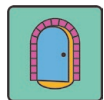
Reflect to learn and connect

Write yourself a note: which cousins seem most useful to contact or investigate as you continue working on your project? What follow-up questions could you ask about those related issues? Where could you go to locate additional information?

Explore related exercises

Date My Topic, Evidence Shopping List, Inner Three-Year-Old

25.2 Date My Topic

*Define your goal*

Use this exercise to uncover what is already known, arguable, and/or current about an issue you are interested in writing about before you commit to a lengthy project.

Background

Most of us would never buy a pair of shoes, meet a stranger for coffee, or even choose a TV comedy show to watch for an hour without doing a little research

first (are the shoes durable? does the stranger have a social media profile that shows whether or not he likes dogs?). Yet students in school often “choose a topic” for a project they will spend hours, days, weeks, or even months on without looking around to find out whether it’s really as interesting and manageable as they hope—or whether there are better options. Doing some early-stage research can help us confidently select, or smartly avoid, an area of inquiry to follow.

Take action

Set your standards: Just like you consider your criteria for clothes to buy or people to date, you should identify what you’re looking for in a good topic for a project. Does it need to be something you’re interested in, or related to a course theme? Should it be highly controversial, currently under discussion, significant to your region, or accessible to novice readers? Will you benefit if you can easily locate credible research on the issue, if the topic is very broad or very narrow, or if there’s a problem that nobody has solved yet? Begin by writing the 3-5 most important characteristics of your “dream topic.”

Name your goal: An online shoe store will allow you to select specific aspects of your shoes by name: you know that if you choose a particular brand name, a type of shoe (loafer vs. athletic), a price-range, or a color, you will home in on different shoes. When you look for information about your topic, the focus and exact words of your search will determine what you find out. List 4-6 questions that you most want to find out right now. Then list 8-10 words you might use to search for information: be sure to include synonyms (car, automobile, vehicle) for some key terms, because not all search engines will catch related issues.

Find out the mainstream view: Although your instructor may caution you that sites like Wikipedia, Yahoo News, or Joe’s Cool Website are not credible enough for the purposes of your final project, they can help you find out whether you want to start a long-term relationship with this issue. Choose a question or a search phrase, and search at least two of the following ways: Search on one or more common platforms (Google, Yahoo, Bing, or even TikTok); search by using a “News” tab or adding “News about” to your search string; search by adding a descriptor like “Controversies about ____,” “Reviews of ____,” or “History of ____” to your open search; search using a generative-artificial-intelligence tool like ChatGPT. Remember this is just a date: skim articles quickly rather than reading them. Write several sentences: what are people interested in, arguing about, or discovering related to your topic? Also, what related issues—and what specific terminology—do they identify that you might find useful?

Find out the scholarly view: If you’re writing for a class project, you should probably know a little about what people who hang around colleges and

universities are saying about your topic. Maybe they've decided it's not very interesting anymore—or conversely, maybe they've decided it's even more exciting than you think. Choose at least one of the following strategies to find out:

- Search in Google Scholar or another research-oriented engine in the open internet
- Search in a general database from your library, like ProQuest or Academic Search Complete or your library's main search engine
- Search in a relevant subject-specific database from your library, such as Psychological Abstracts
- Use a chatbot or other Gen-AI tool and specify that you want sources that come from published research taken from highly credible journals

Remember this is just a date: Skim the abstracts or descriptions quickly rather than reading them. Write several sentences: what are people interested in, arguing about, or discovering related to your topic? Also, what related issues—and what specific *terminology*—do they identify that you might find useful?

Reflect to learn and connect

Look back at your key criteria for a “dream topic.” Suggest two ways that you might narrow, focus, or change your original topic idea to build the best possible relationship with this project going forward.

Explore related exercises

Keyword Bingo, Magic Three Choices, Rate My Source, Seven Generations

25.3 Evidence Garden



Define your goal

Use this exercise to gain rhetorical flexibility by imagining multiple relationships between readers and supporting evidence; to spot an unusual strategy that might engage skeptical readers.

Take action

Generate: Put a few words describing your topic or issue at the top of your page, and begin sketching out a “garden plot”: if you're working on screen, you might insert a 3x4 table; if you're working with markers on paper or stylus on tablet, you can be more freeform. In each box or garden area, “plant” one of the following evidence types (even if you think it doesn't at all match your issue or audience) and leave space to write several lines:

- One-time story (from personal experience, yours or someone else's)
- Deep description (of person, place, object)
- Fact/statistic
- Expert testimony
- Comparison/analogy
- Professional theory/guiding principle
- Relevant example
- Case study
- Experimental data/research report
- Informed opinion/prediction/reflection
- Audio/visual evidence
- Physical artifact

Connect: At the bottom of the page, briefly describe three readers you might aim to reach for your project. To gain maximum flexibility, at least one of these readers should be outside your current target audience—someone from a different age group or stakeholder group, someone with higher or lower investment in the issue—because having an outlier may help you consider better strategies for your major audience.

Garden: Now plant your garden: in each plot, write two or three notes, each about a very specific evidence point you could explore, even if you don't fully know that information yet—or even if you have to make up some facts for now: “Number of hotels in San Antonio with bedbugs reported last year” or “Statement from Marriott CEO” or “compare to Grand Wailea on Maui” or “study shows low profits after bad internet reviews.”

Harvest: Finally, imagine that you can send your readers through to fill their baskets for a salad: for each reader, identify the three most persuasive pieces of evidence *plus* one that you think they might be intrigued by for some extra flavor or color. Write those down next to each reader's description at the bottom of your page.

Reflect to learn and connect

Add a final note or two: What core evidence do you now want to (re)focus on for your project? what additional inquiry or analysis might you pursue as a way to distinguish your project in the eyes of your audience?

Explore related exercises

3D Mind-Map, Counterargument Generator, Question Ladders

25.4 Evidence Shopping List



Define your goal

Use this exercise to broaden the types of evidence you consider searching for, in support of critical researching, while narrowing the scope of your search. Your goal is to limit the time you spend looking for exactly the right information—or to improve the prompt or question that you provide to a chatbot or Gen-AI tool.

Background

You live in an age of information overload, and so you need strategies for being a “smart shopper.” If you go to a big-box store and forget your shopping list, you can become overwhelmed: you start to walk slowly, you get stuck staring at the sixteen different brands or flavors you must choose from, and often you buy items you don’t need or can’t afford. If you start researching without a list, you can also slow down, get overwhelmed by how much is there, and forget to locate the resources that will most help you. Since inquiry is rhetorical, the best lists will help you search not just for what *you* need but for what *your readers* will need.

Take action

Gathering stage: Use a log like the one below to visualize the kind of background information that you will most need to gather in order to have enough knowledge to move forward with your project. You might need a lot of one kind of background information and not much of another, so you don’t have to fill in every box.

Information Type	Such as . . .	Could find this via . . . (website, journal, interview, book, video . . .)
History of this issue		
Scholarly theories about this issue		
Policies, laws, organizations about this issue		
Conversations about related topics		
Unsolved questions or controversies		

Hunting stage: Use a log like the one below to visualize the kind of specific supporting evidence that you might need to hunt for in order to answer the questions of skeptical readers in your primary and secondary audiences. Your readers might trust one kind of evidence much more than another, so you might have several items in one box and few or none in others.

	Possible Reader #1: _____	Possible Reader #2: _____	Could find this via . . . (web-site, journal, interview, book, video . . .)
Personal experiences from memories of . . .			
Descriptions or specific examples of . . .			
Observations and/or measurements of . . .			
Comparisons to other organizations/events such as . . .			
Data from interviews or surveys of . . .			
Case studies of . . .			
Expert testimony (about what? from whom?)			
Expert opinions or theories about . . .			
Historical records such as . . .			
Research reports about . . .			
Government documents or reports about . . .			
Statistics such as . . .			
Financial data about . . .			
Other:			

Reflect to learn and connect

Star * the items on either list that seem most important, and write yourself a note about your next strategies for finding reliable answers to these questions.

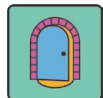
Explore related exercises

Gray-Area Finder, Emperor for a Day, Seven Generations

25.5 Keyword Bingo

Define your goal

Use this exercise to broaden the terms you use in searching for information on



the popular web or in a library database, so that you speed your search without missing crucial information.

Background

If you've ever debated whether to call a beverage a "soda," a "pop," or just a "Coke," you know how confusing it can be when people use different words to mean the same item or concept. On the popular web, a search engine algorithm might look at your search for "cars" and also automatically also indicate sources about "autos" or "automobiles," but it might not. In a library database, "college" might be a key word that refers to one set of schools and "university" might refer to another. As you experiment with terms that are related to your inquiry, you can give yourself the best chance of finding the information you need, whatever it's named.

Take action

Set your goals: Before you begin searching for sources online or in a database, write a full sentence that describes the exact question or topic you need more information about. Identify 3-5 key words from your question. These are likely to be nouns or crucial adjectives (there's a difference between searching for information on *musicians* and searching for information on *American* musicians or *contemporary* musicians).

Use the "BINGO" card below to help you create additional terms, combinations, and phrases that might help you home in on the exact data or testimony you need. You should play out at least two different keywords:

- Your keyword counts for the central box (N-3)
- Your goal is to get any five-in-a-row: across, down, or diagonal. You will need to write at least four new words or phrases to get a BINGO: for instance, you might use the directions in B-1, B-3, B-4, and B-5 to modify your keyword four times (a "free" space doesn't require a new word or phrase)
- If your question is about laws to increase solar energy use in your local community, one key phrase might be "solar energy," and you might respond "B-1 = solar energy AND camping, B-2 = Free, B-3 = sun power, B-4 = photovoltaics, and B-5 = solar energy OR accessible"
- Remember that your combination phrases can use either an AND approach or an OR approach: in many databases,
 - if you think you will find too much information, you need a narrower search, so you would use AND or PLUS
 - if you think you won't find enough information, or you want to check both synonyms (auto/car) you need a broader search, and so you would use OR

	B	I	N	G	O
1	Keyword + second word to connect to your exact experience	Opposite word to help you find alternatives or resistances	Word or phrase about a very broad related concept	FREE	Keyword + a second word or phrase to indicate an example or scenario
2	FREE	Keyword + second word to connect to your general interest in the area	Word or phrase about a broader concept	Keyword + second word to indicate results (cause, improve, policy . . .)	Related word from the abstract or first sentence of a source you already found
3	Related word or phrase used in slang or for young children	Related word or phrase used in lunch-table talk	KEYWORD	Related word or phrase used by scholars or analysts	Related word or phrase used by experts/specialists
4	Related word you found in a Wikipedia article on your keyword	Keyword + second word to indicate location, group, or time period	Word or phrase about a narrower angle	Keyword + second word to connect to your readers' general interest in the area	FREE
5	Keyword + second word to indicate a relevant value (good, fast, cheap, efficient . . .)	FREE	Word or phrase about a very narrow aspect	Keyword + second word to indicate kind of source (data, research, report, story)	Keyword + second word to connect to a specific experience of one targeted reader

Reflect to learn and connect

When you've completed two rounds, finish with a note: what *two* new words or combos seem like they will be most helpful as you search?

Explore related exercises

Date My Topic, Evidence Shopping List, Source Synthesis Grid

25.6 Map The Terrain

Define your goal



Use this exercise to visualize the conversation taking place about an issue you are writing on.

Take action

Set the context: Write a sentence or two explaining the main issue or goal of your writing project. Then jot down a list of at least 7-10 different “voices” that are participating in this conversation: these might be participants in related events, stakeholders and opponents, scholars or theorists in the field, authors of secondary sources you have been gathering during your inquiry, organizations advocating for change, people you have interviewed or surveyed, and/or members of your target audience group. For each voice, add a note about its main goal, position, or contribution: what information does that person or group bring, what position does he/she/it stake out, what goal does he/she/it have?

Make a map: Take out a blank sheet of paper or open a document in a program in which you are comfortable drawing shapes and figures. Your goal is to create a physical map of how these voices relate to one another using one of the options below. This might take you a couple of tries, so don’t worry about getting it right the first time out. Also, while you can stay with a basic approach if you worry about your drawing skills, you might find that *attempting* to draw more than lines and circles opens up pathways in your brain that help feed your higher thinking and create new understandings about your project. Since you won’t be graded on your artistic quality, feel free to experiment with colors, figures, and visual representations.

- **Traditional map:** You can draw a traditional map, with your “voices” positioned as towns, cities, and countries—near the center of the map if they are important in the conversation, near the edges if they are not, larger if they cover more ground, smaller if they have less to contribute. Place similar voices close together, and/or insert roads or rivers to connect them; use lakes, mountains, forests, swamps, and/or deserts to indicate spaces or barriers between voices that disagree or have alternate points of view. You may name the places on your map by the original voice names, or provide new names that help indicate how you view the conversation evolving in relation to your issue.
- **Basic Venn diagram map:** In a Venn diagram, two overlapping circles show what percentage of two separate categories is shared. You can assign each of your “voices” to a circle (or a square, or hexagon), draw it larger or smaller to show how powerful the voice is, and situate it on the page to show whether it is at the center of the conversation or on the fringe, and to show which other voices it is nearest to or furthest from. Some of your “voice” circles might overlap one another to show that they agree or address some of the same information; in other cases, you might add walls or barriers to your map to show how opposing circles will never be in contact with one another.

- **Collage map:** You can use cut-outs from hard-copy newspapers or magazines you own or pictures or icons/photos you download into your document to represent each “voice.” Try to make the image larger or more vibrant or more powerful-looking if the voice is more important, and smaller or weaker-looking if the voice is a sideline-voice; tape or paste the image centrally on the page if it is central to the conversation, and be sure to have voices that make similar points situated next to or even overlapping one another.

Identify features, connections, and empty spaces: You will need to write or type names and perhaps some descriptions near your circles, images, or cities to help explain the voices on your map. Regardless of your type of map, you are welcome to draw in some other map-like features such as roads, mountains, swamps, or deserts, to show places where the conversation has connection points or difficulties, and to demonstrate the character of the conversation: is it friendly? intense? scattered? tangled? Finally, think about leaving some *empty spaces* for voices you haven’t yet heard from: what stakeholders are being ignored? what questions haven’t you found answers to yet? which local or recent issues have not been adequately addressed? what complications are difficult to solve?

Reflect to learn and connect

Write a sentence or two about what the map tells you: which “places” on this map would someone (especially from your group of readers) most like to visit? How might someone plan a trip (organize a writing project) around this map? What “voices” were hard to find a place for, and what voices seemed to be missing? Write a sentence or two about what you think your next steps on this project (planning, inquiring, reading, revising) should involve.

Explore related exercises

[Audience/Stakeholder Mapping](#), [Counterargument Generator](#), [Gray-Area Finder](#)

25.7 Question Ladders: Known/Unknown Survey



Define your goal

Use this exercise to use a basic-to-complex set of questions to determine what knowledge and understanding you already have about an issue, and what further inquiry you could pursue.

Take action

Set your context: Write a sentence or two at the top of your page about your

current writing project or the issue you're working on. Create a two-column log: label the left side "Known/Confident" and the right side "Unknown."

Find the knowns and unknowns: For at least three of the information-levels listed below, use the left column to quickly list as many aspects as possible of what you already know or can consider about your issue. You may use full sentences or simple phrases; try to add ideas that only you might know, and to reach for ideas that you know but don't always think about. Use the right-hand column to list similar kinds of information that you don't yet know but that you're curious about or that your readers might ask questions about.

- **Facts, known:** What precise facts, occurrences, experiences, measurements, or examples are you sure you know of right now? Are there any that you know that lots of people don't know? **Facts, unknown:** What factual questions or data might you or your readers need to know? What reasonable factual questions might someone ask about this issue or situation?
- **Explanations, known:** What do you understand clearly about how this person / place / object / situation functions, or what its essential nature is? What leads up to it or supports it, and what happens then? Who and what else is involved? **Explanations, unknown:** What don't you understand about its nature or its function? What important questions might readers ask that begin with "I just don't understand how/why ___?"
- **Connections, known:** What do you know for sure that this person / place / object / situation is just like or completely unlike? In what categories are you sure it belongs or doesn't belong? **Connections, unknown:** What *might* you or your readers consider comparing this to, if you knew more about it? What *could* be another person / place / object / situation that could help you explain how this one works, should work, or should avoid working?
- **Predictions, confident:** What are you confident is likely to happen regarding this person / place / object / situation in the near future? What interpretations, reading between the lines, or "behind the scenes" analyses can you suggest with some assurance? **Predictions, unknown:** What important questions still remain, in your mind or the minds of readers, about the future related to this issue? What gray areas are difficult to interpret, and what remains confusing or complicated to analyze?
- **Judgments, confident:** What evidence-based conclusions or recommendations can you already make with confidence regarding this issue? **Judgments, unknown:** What kinds of conclusions, decisions, or judgments would you or your readers like to be able to make, that you do not have sufficient supporting evidence for right now?

Reflect to learn and connect

When you have completed several pairs of Known and Unknown listings, take a few minutes to review your Unknown categories, and write several sentences that can serve as an initial inquiry plan: what steps can you take, and what kind of sources can you consult, to help you fill in the gaps in your and your readers' understanding?

Explore related exercises

Evidence Shopping List, Map the Terrain, Source Synthesis Grid

25.8 Rate My Source

*Define your goal*

Use this exercise to determine if a secondary source of information is high-enough quality to use for your writing project.

Background

Is your source a risk to cite, or is it high quality to meet the demands of your specific project? You might know that you should check your source for “credibility”: one popular approach to that is to ask about CRAP: whether the source is:

- Current enough to be valuable,
- Reliable in acknowledging sources and presenting accurate analysis,
- Authoritative by virtue of the author or organization’s expertise, and
- clear in its Purpose, without a level of bias that interferes with accuracy or thoroughness.

But credibility is only one way that a source is useful. Some completely non-credible sources—such as incorrect and sexist rants posted anonymously on social media—could still be useful for a researcher to refer to if they met other criteria. After all, if you want to write about how sexism appears on social media, those rants would be accessible and relevant, and studying a hundred of them would provide a substantial record that could help you provide new insights about your question.

So it helps to check your source out completely. To find out whether your source is valuable for your particular project, without too many risks, you can check it using the A-RISC guide below. A source that scores 12-15 points, with few or no subscores of “1,” is likely to be acceptable to most academic or professional audiences. However, if you’re relying on one source significantly in your project, or it is the basis for a key argument, you will probably want to aim for a score of 16-20

points on that keystone source.

- **Note 1:** It's unlikely that a source will earn a perfect score, since sources that are *very substantive/credible* are usually not written in the most highly *accessible* style. As a researcher, you will need to look for sources that, individually and collectively, balance these characteristics.
- **Note 2:** These categories are *rhetorical*, because what is “credible” for one audience or “relevant” for one project will change as the audience, goals, and genre change.
- **Note 3:** Thus there is *no such thing as a “bad source”*—only a source that is less appropriate or powerful for a particular project, goal, or audience.

Take action

Review your external source—whether it is a website, news article, scholarly journal report, editorial opinion, marketing analysis, research study, or interview with an expert—using the chart below. Give your source a score of 1-5 in each of the five categories, and add up the total.

	1	2	3	4	5
Accessible: Allows the researcher to understand key information	Only a PhD expert could understand this source	The source is written mostly for an audience of specialists in the field	The source is written for an educated audience that knows something about the field	Any adult could read and understand this source	A fifth-grade student could understand this source
Relevant: Connects to the researcher's goal and needs	The source mentions something about part of the current topic	A section of the source is connected to questions or issues of this project	All or most of source is about an issue that's connected to this project	The source is related, and at least one section is precisely about the key issue of the project	The whole source addresses a key issue for this project
Insightful: Provides new information or analysis to extend the researcher's knowledge	The source presents obvious ideas: most people know this information already	The source reports information that is familiar to people who attend to this issue	The source has a few new ideas, data points, or arguments, but mostly reports common information	The source presents several new ideas or a significant amount of unfamiliar data	The source is a new research study or provides fresh analysis from a new perspective

	1	2	3	4	5
<p>Substantive: Gives enough depth of information and analysis to provide a complete picture, without overlooking contrary or marginalized perspectives</p>	<p>The source is very brief (300-500 words or less) and/or presents a general picture (e.g., short news article or overview)</p>	<p>The source is brief (500-1000 words) and/or provides mostly description and summary (e.g., full news report or blog post)</p>	<p>The source is medium length and provides some analysis or depth of detail (e.g., 3-5 page magazine or journal article or extended web resource, 5-10 minute video)</p>	<p>The source is extended and provides in-depth analysis and addresses multiple perspectives (e.g., special report in print or video, multi-section website, short scholarly article)</p>	<p>The source goes deeply in-depth on a key question, fully exploring alternate perspectives (e.g., scholarly article, book chapter, book or documentary film)</p>
<p>Credible: Meets the “CRAP” test for Currency of data, Reliability of verifiable information, Authority and expertise of the source, and a Purpose that is not compromised by bias or conflict of interest</p>	<p>The author and publication are unknown or are not verified as expert; the source gives mostly opinion without citation to external sources, and may reveal significant bias; there is no date or the document is out-of-date</p>	<p>The author or publication can be verified as having a history of reliable information, but may not be widely known or respected; there is some reference to valid external sources or specific experiences; the document is recent enough for the researcher’s needs</p>	<p>The author or organization is a known expert and/or the publication has mainstream media-level credibility (CNN, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, US Census); the document may be recent or have historical value; the focus of the source is primarily the author’s educated opinion or observations with few sources cited; bias may be present if openly acknowledged</p>	<p>The author or organization is a known expert and/or the publication has mainstream media-level credibility (CNN, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, US Census); the source refers to some specialized data in the field and acknowledges alternate views; the document has been reviewed for accuracy and provides recent data</p>	<p>The author, organization, and/or publication is known and respected specifically for work in the field/ area of the project; the source cites multiple external sources related to the field and examines alternate perspectives; the document has been reviewed for accuracy and analysis; information is up-to-date and connected to current conversations</p>

Reflect to learn and connect

When you're done, write yourself a note: Does the score you got reflect your sense of this source's quality? If you wanted to find a higher-quality source, what features would you want to look for especially? And if you wanted a *complementary* source—one that was strong in areas where this source is weaker—what might you go looking for?

Explore related exercises

Evidence Garden, Reason Appallingly, They Say + I Say