

# Gale Resources Tip Sheet

## Gale In Context Toolbox—How to Judge Information

The *Gale In Context* toolbox tip sheets are designed to help middle school and high school researchers prepare a written report. This document will explain how to **judge various types of information** used to write reports.

Information comes from lots of different sources. Here are some you're probably familiar with:

- Encyclopedias
- Books
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Internet sites

Every source has its own way of presenting information. While some information is reliable and factual, some is guesswork and opinion. Some is pure fun, and some isn't useful at all. The trick is to know the difference.

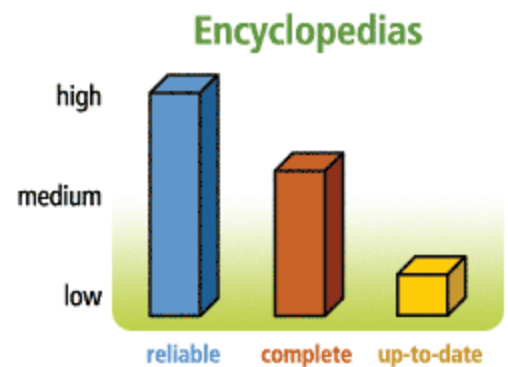
When you're doing research for a report, you want to make sure your sources are good. How do you decide which are good and which are not? Your teachers and librarians can guide you, but in the end, you have to be the judge. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Is this source reliable? Does it contain facts or opinions?
- Is this source complete? Does it say all there is to say about my topic?
- Is this source up to date? Was it written recently or a long time ago?

### Encyclopedias

You probably use encyclopedias a lot when you do research for a report. This is fine because the information in encyclopedias is almost always factual. In some ways, encyclopedia articles (often called "entries") are kind of like reports—they're written to inform you about a subject. Encyclopedias are rich in facts. Does this mean they always have the best information? Not exactly.

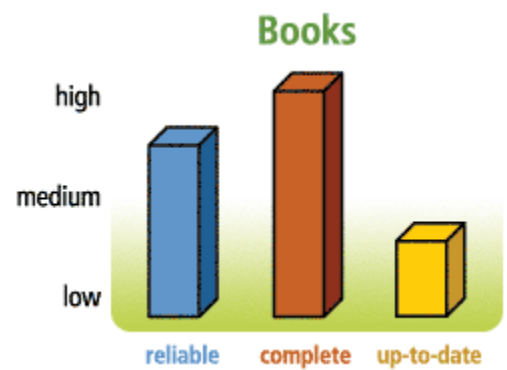
Encyclopedia articles usually present just the highlights of a topic, so they aren't complete. Often you'll need more detail than an encyclopedia can provide. Encyclopedias also don't always have the latest information about a topic. Since they aren't always up to date, sometimes you'll need more current information.



### Books

Books are good sources to use when writing a report. They're usually reliable, as long as the purpose of the book is to inform. What's more, if you're lucky enough to find a book on your topic, you'll probably find plenty of facts and details. Books are often complete sources and cover their topic thoroughly.

But books are sometimes out of date. Always check to see when your book was written before using it as a report source. If it's more than a few years old, it may be missing some new information that you'll want to know about.



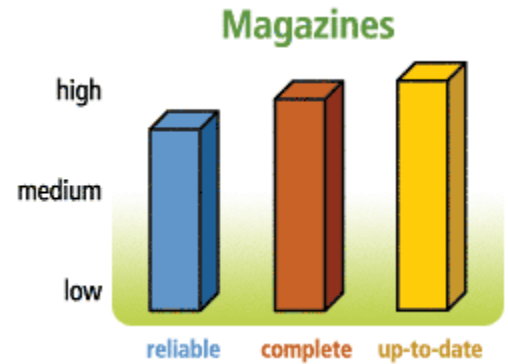
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### Magazines

Magazine articles are also good sources of information for reports. They're often rich in facts and more detailed than books. The information in magazine articles is usually up to date.

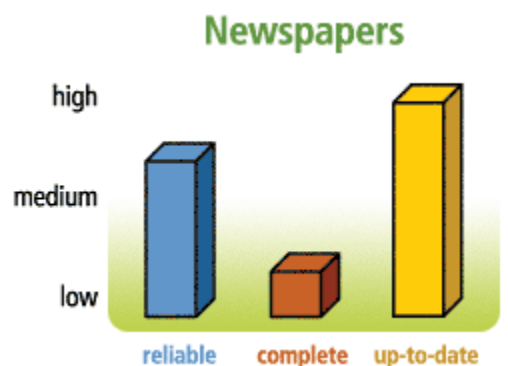
Some magazine articles are just for fun and aren't written to inform you, but to make you laugh. When using a magazine article as a report source, always judge the purpose of the article. Is it educational or for entertainment? Use educational articles as report sources.



### Newspapers

Newspapers can be good sources of information for reports. The articles are often about current events, so the information is usually current. Newspaper articles are often factual, especially the ones on the front page.

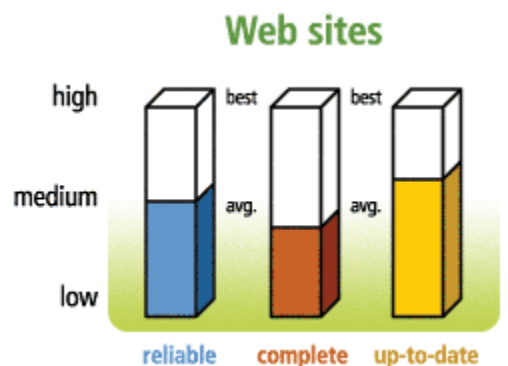
But sometimes there isn't a lot of detail in a newspaper article. Like encyclopedias, newspapers tend to present the highlights of a topic, so the coverage isn't as complete as in other sources.



### Websites

It isn't always easy to judge information on websites. Some are reliable, but others aren't. Some cover their topic in great detail, but many provide only the highlights. Many are updated regularly, but some aren't updated at all. How do you judge them?

One trick is to judge websites the same as magazine articles—by considering the purpose. Is the information on the website meant to help you learn or is it just for fun? The best websites to use as report sources are the ones that are meant to inform you about something. Websites meant to entertain you aren't as useful as report sources.



### Something to keep in mind about websites

Online databases available from your library are accessed via the web and may look like websites, but these resources are often made up of encyclopedias, books, magazines, and other sources. These types of resources rate high in reliability, completeness, and currency. Look for citations to see where the sources are coming from and to check dates.

You can download a worksheet to help judge information here:

[https://support.gale.com/doc/judginginfo\\_ws](https://support.gale.com/doc/judginginfo_ws)

**Need more help? Ask your librarian!**

Gale, here for **everyone.**