

## Evaluating Information

**Information Literacy GEO this assignment addresses:** Evaluate, critically analyze, and select information sources. This assignment will help students assess the value of information by ranking it using a points system. Learning a process for selection and evaluation will assist students in focusing on only the most pertinent information for their academic projects.

### Objectives of assignment:

- Students learn to evaluate sources based on relevant criteria
- Students learn to evaluate the relative merits of sources
- Students analyze the contents and possible limitations of sources
- Students learn to select the most relevant and useful sources

### Preparation:

Have students bring three different journal or magazine articles related to their research topic. Remind students to have the full citation information for each article. This exercise can be completed without the use of computers.

The instructor should hand out a card for each resource to be evaluated, 3 cards per student in this case. Read the questions aloud as the students evaluate their first article. This will give students the opportunity to ask questions about definitions of certain terms. The instructor will probably have to describe the differences between scholarly, refereed scholarly, and popular resources.

Have the students add up their ERA to determine the usefulness of the source. They should move on to evaluating their next 2 resources on their own.

### Assignment: Earned Research Average (ERA)

Inspired by pitching statistics, this exercise will help you evaluate, critically analyze, and select information sources.

#### Currency—How old is the Source?

If the article is 2003 or newer

If the article is older than 2003

If the article is 1999 or older

#### POINTS

add 3 points

subtract 1 point

subtract 2 points

#### Coverage—How broadly is the Topic discussed?

If the article provides a good amount of information

If the article is too narrow (not enough info)

If the article is too broad (too much info)

add 2 points

subtract 2 points

subtract 1 point

#### Authority—Who is the Author?

If the author has written on the topic before

If the author is a specialist in the field

If the author works for a college or university

add 2 points

add 2 points

add 1 point

**Relevance—How useful is the Information?**

If the content is seems very useful	add 2 points
If the content seems somewhat useful	add 1 point
If content is not useful	subtract 1 point

**References—How many references are cited?**

If there are 5 or more citations	add 2 points
If there are 1-5 citations	add 1 point
If there are no citations	subtract 2 points

**Scholarship—How scholarly is the Material?**

If article is from a refereed scholarly journal	add 2 points
If article is from a scholarly journal	add 1 point
If article is from a popular magazine	zero points

**Now, add up the total for this resource** **Total** \_\_\_\_\_

**9** Points and above = Excellent source

**5-8** Points = Acceptable Source

**4** or fewer Points = Potentially useful as background material, but keep looking

Of the three sources you have evaluated, circle the “ranking” this source would receive

#1

#2

#3

Please justify your ranking with a few statements about your judgment of the sources:

**Important summation/review points:**

A class discussion should conclude the exercise; ask students if anyone has found a source that they will not be using after all. Have students make suggestions about where they might find more sources that are valuable.