Back in the old days, before the Internet, the biggest problem in doing research for classes was to find enough sources. Today, between books, magazines, ebooks, ejournals, and websites, the biggest problem is too many sources. How to choose? Look at each one in these five ways.

1. **Accuracy**: How accurate is the information? Are there any obvious typos? From what you know of the topic, does it sound reasonable? (If you are dealing with a topic that is new to you, try looking for verification in other reference sources.)

2. **Authority**: Who is the author? Is it a person or an organization? Does the source describe the author’s credentials? Do they know what they are talking about?

3. **Objectivity**: What is the purpose of the publication? To inform, to persuade, to entertain? Is there obvious bias? If so, does the author admit to it or try to hide it?

4. **Currency**: This is a little easier to determine. Look for a copyright date, magazine issue date, or “last updated” date.

5. **Coverage**: Here you can ask how thoroughly the publication covers its subject. Is it too general or too specific? As far as you can tell, is anything left out?

Below is an example of a good quality web page.

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**NOAA**

**NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION**

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Strong El Niño sets the stage for 2015-2016 winter weather

October 15, 2015

Forecasts at NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center issued the U.S. Winter Outlook today favoring cooler and wetter weather in Southern Tier states with above-average temperatures most likely in the West and across the Northern Tier. This year’s El Niño, among the strongest on record, is expected to influence weather and climate patterns this winter by impacting the position of the Pacific jet stream.

“A strong El Niño is in place and should exert a strong influence over our weather this winter,” said Mike Halpert, deputy director, NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center. “While temperature and precipitation impacts associated with El Niño are favored, El Niño is not the only player. Cold-air outbreaks and snow storms will likely occur at times this winter. However, the frequency, number and intensity of these events cannot be predicted on a seasonal timescale.”

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**Authority**: Part of the federal government

**Currency**: Shown in date & title

**Objectivity**: Just the facts

**Accuracy**: Text and graphics are clear

**Coverage**: United States

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