

## SMELL Test Evaluation Checklist

SMELL: S = Source; M = Motivation; E = Evidence; L = Logic; L = Left Out

Using the same checklist to consistently evaluate all of your sources can save time and effort, and help you to compare sources. Downside: You could still miss something important that's not on the checklist. Some sources, like Wikipedia, may pass these initial tests but still may not be acceptable for college level research assignments.

<i>Source being evaluated</i>	<i>Date:</i> _____
Title: _____	
Author: _____	
Location or URL: _____	

Check with your professor or librarian for advice and guidance. Be skeptical and be critical. You may still have concerns- if so, follow those concerns. Look for other clues, ask more pointed questions. For each criteria, answer the questions, and then rank quality on a scale of one to ten.

Allow one plus point for each positive criteria that is included. Subtract the minus points for problems, errors, inconsistencies. Higher score means better quality.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Plus Points</b>	<b>Minus Points</b>
<b>Source</b> Who is providing the information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Author's name is provided <input type="checkbox"/> Author's credentials provided <input type="checkbox"/> Author's relevant experience or education is provided <input type="checkbox"/> Easy to find more information about the author	<input type="checkbox"/> No author's name (or organization name) <input type="checkbox"/> No credentials <input type="checkbox"/> Credentials don't match topic, experience is not relevant <input type="checkbox"/> Author not found anywhere else, or negative info found
<b>Motivation</b> Why are they telling me this?	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly stated, for information only <input type="checkbox"/> No pressure or encouragement towards a position <input type="checkbox"/> Not selling anything or any product	<input type="checkbox"/> Purpose not clear or misleading <input type="checkbox"/> Strong pressure to get agreement with a position <input type="checkbox"/> Selling a position or product
<b>Evidence</b> What evidence is provided for claims or generalizations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Evidence with links, citations, or references <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence matches to claims <input type="checkbox"/> Evidence accessible, easy to follow up on	<input type="checkbox"/> No evidence, only claims and assertions or opinions <input type="checkbox"/> Some evidence, but no links, citations, or references <input type="checkbox"/> Some evidence, but doesn't match claim
<b>Logic</b> Do the facts logically compel the conclusions?	<input type="checkbox"/> Data and facts are verifiable, clear, correct <input type="checkbox"/> Facts line up with conclusions <input type="checkbox"/> Explanations and arguments are reasonable and logical	<input type="checkbox"/> Data used is unclear or misleading <input type="checkbox"/> Circular reasoning, "everybody knows" or facts unrelated to claim <input type="checkbox"/> Appeals to emotion, direct or implied attacks, insults, slurs, blaming
<b>Left out</b> What's missing that might change our interpretation of the information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Incompatible data is acknowledged <input type="checkbox"/> Other explanations are considered <input type="checkbox"/> Diverse perspectives are included	<input type="checkbox"/> Incompatible data ignored or misused <input type="checkbox"/> Absolute positions, right/wrong <input type="checkbox"/> Diverse perspective excluded, not considered
<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Plus Points Total</b>	<b>Minus Points Total</b>