Evaluating Your Sources

Use a Rat TRAP:

How can I tell the credible information from the bad?  
But...they don't know I'm a rat!

What do you look at when buying milk?

Why do we need to critically evaluate ALL sources?

• Context is king: if it doesn't fit your need, why use it?
• Keep out the "rats" (bad, inaccurate, or biased information)
• Better research sources = better paper = better grades
• Bias is everywhere, but can be identified
• Web: professional-looking sites can be produced cheaply & quickly by anyone
• Evaluating information is a life-long skill that effects all aspects of modern living
• Accurate information = informed citizens = better democracy

4 Evaluation Factors:

Timeliness (when?)
- Does the topic you are researching require current data?
- When was the information authored/created or last updated?

Reliability (how?)
- Are the author's sources documented? Research methods revealed?
- Is the publication peer-reviewed/scholarly?

Authority (who?)
- Author credentials available?
- Is the author qualified to write on the topic?

Purpose (why?)
- Is there a discernable bias or agenda? Misinformation or propaganda?
- More information on identifying purpose / bias: http://tinyurl.com/infoeval