Evaluating information sources, including books, journal articles and websites

**Remember the 4 “R”s**

| RECENT | Is the information timely and up-to-date?  
|        | Is the information timeless because it is a classic source?  
|        | When was the book or journal article published?  
|        | When was the website last updated? |

| RELIABLE | **Who wrote the book, article or website?** (Websites will often include this information under the “About Us” link)  
|          | - Are they an expert in the subject?  
|          | - Are they associated with an institution or organisation in a relevant field?  
|          | - Do they list their qualifications? Do they provide contact details?  
|          | - Look at the URL or address of a website. Is an educational, governmental, organisational or commercial website? Domain Categories:  
|          |   .edu (academic institution)  
|          |   .gov (government body)  
|          |   .com or .co (commercial body)  
|          |   .org (non-profit organizations)  
|          | **Is the information biased in any way?**  
|          | - Is it written or sponsored by someone with a vested interest such as a pharmaceutical company, a land developer or a tobacco company?  
|          | **Can the information be verified?**  
|          | - Is there a bibliography or reference list showing the books and journal articles used by the author? (Websites should have links to sources of information, or list the references used).  
|          | **Who has published the information?**  
|          | - For books you can look at the publisher. Most scholarly books are published by either a university press, well respected commercial publisher, governments, professional bodies or research institutions  
|          | **Is the article from a scholarly journal?**  
|          | - Journals can be either scholarly or popular. Generally, you would use scholarly journals for your assignments. See over for a comparison of scholarly and popular journals. |

| READABLE | Can you easily read and understand the information?  
|          | Who is the target audience? Is it the general public, university students, or researchers and professionals in the field?  
|          | Is the information too basic, or is it too technical for you to understand? |

| RELEVANT | Is the information relevant to your topic?  
|          | Does it give an overview of the topic or go into the details of a particular aspect?  
|          | Does the information support or refute an argument? |