Identify reliable sources of information

Evaluation is one important part of thinking critically – these steps will assist you to develop skills in this process.

What information do you need?
- General or specialized?
- What is the key concept?
- How much information is needed?
- What coverage of information is needed? (eg. Time, place, point of view, comprehensiveness)

Evaluation criteria
- Authority and reliability
  - Is the author identified and credentials clear
  - What is the type of publisher (academic, government, trade etc.)
  - Is the information refereed?
  - Intended audience?
  - Validity? (are the cited sources verifiable?)
  - Currency
  - Scope
  - Format
  - Type of information
    - Primary – raw data, diaries, letters etc.
    - Secondary – information analyzed and interpreted
    - Tertiary – based on secondary and summarized (eg. Systematic reviews)

How to use tools to help you evaluate authors
- Certain tools will assist in checking credibility of authors
  - Biographical indexes
  - Book reviews
  - Library catalogue
  - Citation indexes

Evaluating web resources (additional criteria)
- Type of web site
  - URL’s give clue as to the type of site (eg. .edu – educational, .gov – government, .com – commercial)
- Authority and verifiability
  - Who is responsible for the content? (HINT – look at the contacts or on the bottom of home page
- Stability
  - Web content changes frequently. Last updated should appear along with when it was produced.