

Source Evaluation Checklist

Source = Any individual who provides information to a reporter, whether quoted, paraphrased or otherwise cited

I	Independent	Does the quoted person (source) have personal interests at stake?	Potential personal interests: Financial, Emotional, Political, Professional, Religious, Safety	Red Flags: Employer/Investor, Lover, Patron, Colleague, Pastor, Neighbor
M	Multiple	Are there two or more people who are saying the same thing?	If only one source, is there a good reason? If there are two or more, are they related in any way that could limit their ability to contradict one another?	Red Flags: Family, team-mates, house-mates, friends are less credible than independent corroborators.
V	Verifies	Does the source provide material that verifies what they say (Data, Documents, Photos, Recordings, etc)	Look closely at statements. Are declarations backed up with evidence, or merely asserted?	Red Flags: Strong language, emphatic tone, instead of strong evidence.
A	Authoritative	Does the source have the training or experience to back up what they say?	Is this the right person to ask? Do they have the expertise or experience that gives their comments greater weight?	Red Flags: Credible people, but outside their expertise. I.E. Lawyer talking science, engineer talking investments.
I	Informed	Is this source well-informed about the specific news topic: e.g. an eye-witness or participant?	How does this source know what they know? If they do not have personal knowledge, where did they get their information?	Red Flags: Does this source have greater access to the scene or information?
N	Named	Is this source quoted by name?	Named means the source is answerable for what they say and therefore more likely to be reliable.	Red Flags: Legitimate reasons for anonymity can include fear of physical harm, retribution, humiliation.

(From the Center for News Literacy, Stony Brook University School of Journalism)