

The Open University's Library has developed a mnemonic tool that can help your students to assess a source relatively quickly to decide whether it is worth reading the whole thing and using it in their work. We call this PROMPT. Although this is designed to interrogate secondary literature, some of its core principles can equally be applied to primary sources.

The table below summarises PROMPT and has been adapted for use with this CPD history course:

P rovenance	Is it clear where the information has come from? Can you identify the author(s)/organisation(s)? Are there credible references/citations (e.g. from known scholarly publishers such as university presses) that could lead to further reading? Can the author and source of the material (e.g. the journal or publisher) be considered a reliable authority on the subject?
R elevance	Is the information you have found relevant to the topic you are researching? Does it meet your specific requirements (e.g. does it provide a clear historical argument that you can understand)?
O bjectivity	Does the author or owner of the information make clear their own and/or alternative views? Is the article biased, or motivated by a particular agenda? Is the language emotive? Does it reject opposing viewpoints in a way that is not scholarly and evidence-based?
M ethod	Is it clear how the research was carried out? What types of sources (primary and secondary) have been used? Were the methods appropriate?
P resentation	Is the content presented and communicated clearly? Consider the language, layout and structure: is the information logically laid out and easy to follow?
T imeliness	How up-to-date is the material? Is it clear when it was written? Does the age of the information matter – does it still meet your requirements, or would it be considered 'obsolete' for your purposes (i.e. for a specific assignment)?