Evaluate a Web Source’s Credibility

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

In this estimated 40-minute lesson, learners evaluate what a source can support for a specific question by checking its creator or access, purpose, evidence and method, date, and source trail. They state limits and a useful next check rather than treating one cue or a polished page as proof.

A five-move source check

Credibility asks how well the details in a source support what it says for the question you need to answer. Start with that question. Then check five things: (1) who made the source and what access or relevant experience the person has; (2) the source’s purpose and any stated sponsor or interest; (3) what evidence it gives and how that information was gathered; (4) when it was made and whether the information still fits your question; and (5) whether an important claim can be traced to an original record or compared with an independent source that shows its evidence. Use a source only for what its details support. A source can be useful for one question and weak for another. A polished page, official-looking badge, old date, or personal story is one clue to examine, not proof by itself. Explain what you can conclude, what remains uncertain, and what you would check next. These fictional cards are offline practice examples, not real websites or reports.

Model: check one question

Model card: Maple Bend attendance note

FICTIONAL OFFLINE SOURCE CARD — no live website is shown.
Page title: Maple Bend Library Club Attendance Notes
Creator: Nia Torres, fictional library assistant
Date: October 20, 2025
Purpose: Report recorded attendance at recent club meetings.
Evidence: The note says sign-in sheets list 8, 11, 10, and 9 attendees at four after-school meetings held from September 25 to October 16. It says the counts were copied from those sheets.
Limits and links: The sign-in sheets are not attached. The note does not record why students came or missed a meeting, and it does not report a before-school trial. No underlying record link is shown.

Modeled evaluation

Question: How many people signed in to each of the four listed after-school meetings? Think aloud about who made the note, where its counts came from, and what the note cannot show.

Nia Torres, a fictional library assistant, made the note. It reports 8, 11, 10, and 9 people signed in at the four listed meetings. It says the counts were copied from sign-in sheets. Because the sheets are not attached, I would check them before treating the counts as verified. The note cannot tell why students came or whether a morning meeting would work.

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Guided comparison: two fictional offline source cards

Guided card A: Maple Bend Student Council poll

FICTIONAL OFFLINE SOURCE CARD — no live website is shown.
Page title: Maple Bend Student Council Schedule Poll
Creator: Student Council survey team
Date: October 20, 2025
Purpose: Share Grade 6 students' stated availability for a possible weekly reading club.
Evidence and method: One question was sent to 120 Grade 6 students: "Which weekly meeting time could work for you?" Forty-eight students replied voluntarily. Of those replies, 14 chose before school, 25 chose after school, and 9 chose either time. The tally sheet is not attached.
Limits: Not all invited students replied. The poll records stated possible availability, not actual attendance.

Guided card B: BrightStart reading journal promotion

FICTIONAL OFFLINE SOURCE CARD — no live website is shown.
Page title: "A Better Morning for Every Reader"
Creator: BrightStart Shop Team; a shop link offers a reading journal for sale.
Date: 2022
Purpose: Promote a product.
Claim: "A before-school reading club helps every student focus all day." The page lists no survey, study, method, or supporting source for this claim. A decorative "Top Choice" badge has no explanation or linked results.

Guided evaluation

Question: Which meeting time did the Grade 6 students who answered say could work for them? Which card is more useful for that exact question, and why? State one thing the poll can show and one thing it cannot show. Then examine the BrightStart claim: What evidence supports it, and what would you check before organizers chose a time? Use or adapt: “For ___, Card ___ is more useful because ___. It reports ____, but it cannot show ___. Card ___ claims ___, but ___. I would check ___ next.” Do not judge by the badge or page design.

Guided notes or reply (6 lines)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Independent evaluation: two fictional offline source cards

Independent card C: Maple Bend club sign-up summary

FICTIONAL OFFLINE SOURCE CARD — no live website is shown.
Page title: Maple Bend Library Club Sign-up Summary
Creator: Nia Torres, fictional library assistant
Date: November 3, 2025
Purpose: Summarize current members' stated availability.
Evidence and method: A one-question form was sent to all 18 current club members on October 31. Twelve replied: 7 chose before school, 4 chose after school, and 1 chose either. The summary says members could select one answer. The tally sheet is not attached.
Limits: Six members did not reply. Stated availability is not the same as attendance at a trial.

Independent card D: Robin's bus-route notes

FICTIONAL OFFLINE SOURCE CARD — no live website is shown.
Page title: Notes from the Route 4 Bus Stop
Creator: Robin, a fictional Grade 6 student
Date: November 3, 2025
Purpose: Share a student's observations about morning travel.
Evidence and method: Robin says they asked 5 classmates who ride Route 4. Four said a before-school meeting might be hard because their bus arrives shortly before first period.
Limits and links: This is one student's informal conversation with 5 classmates, not a poll of every club member. No bus timetable or wider survey is linked.

Question: What can Cards C and D help organizers consider before testing a before-school meeting for current club members? Write 4–6 sentences. Explain what each source can tell about the question, identify each creator or relevant access, and explain each source's method or evidence. Explain how at least one source's stated purpose or perspective affects what it can support. Give a cautious conclusion, name at least one relevant limit, and suggest a useful next check. You may recommend any schedule; your score is based on source reasoning, not your schedule preference. Use the planner and rubric to check your response.

Independent source evaluation planner

Use Cards C and D to plan your 4–6 sentence evaluation. You may favor either schedule. Separate what each source reports from what it does not establish.

Question I am checking

Who made each source? What access or perspective do they have?

What evidence and method does each source show?

What purpose, date, or interest should I consider?

What can the sources not establish? What should I check next?

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Draft your 4–6 sentence evaluation

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Source evaluation rubric

Score each criterion 0–2; total 0–8.

Question and source fit — 2: Accurately explains what each source can tell about the question and identifies each creator or relevant access. 1: Gives some accurate, relevant source-fit or creator/access information, but leaves part incomplete or inaccurate. 0: Gives no accurate, relevant source-fit or creator/access information.

Purpose and perspective — 2: Explains how at least one source’s stated purpose, interest, or perspective affects what it can support, without inventing motives. 1: Identifies a relevant stated purpose, interest, or perspective, but the explanation is incomplete, unclear, or partly unsupported. 0: Gives no relevant supported purpose or perspective reasoning, or only assigns unsupported motives.

Evidence and checking — 2: Accurately explains each source’s method, sample, or source trail and proposes a useful date, record, or comparison check. 1: Gives some accurate, relevant evidence or checking information, but does not meet both parts fully. 0: Gives no accurate, relevant evidence or checking information; appearance or a badge alone is not evidence.

Limits and conclusion — 2: Gives a conclusion within the evidence, names a relevant limit, and suggests a useful next check. 1: Gives only one or two of those three elements accurately and relevantly. 0: Gives none of those elements accurately and relevantly.

Your score does not depend on which meeting time you prefer. A source may be useful for one question and limited for another.

Teacher directions

Grade 6 ELA. Adapt the reading and response demands to your students and curriculum.

Prerequisites: Learners can read or listen to a short source card and explain a choice. No prior website-evaluation vocabulary is required.

Materials: Learner pages in print or editable DOCX.; Pencil or another way to mark and draft an evaluation.; Optional highlighter for marking source details.

Estimated preparation: 5 minutes. Basis: Estimate to read fictional source cards and keys and prepare learner pages.

Estimated teaching: 40 minutes. Basis: Planning estimate: opening 3, strategy 7, model 8, guided comparison 10, independent evaluation 10, closure 2.

Before teaching — about 5 minutes (estimate): read the fictional offline cards and keys. All page titles, people, dates, counts, claims, and organizations are invented practice content, not real websites, surveys, records, or student data. Prepare the learner PDF or editable DOCX.

Opening — 3 minutes (estimate): ask what makes a source useful for answering a question. Tell learners to judge sources for a particular question and to explain what the evidence supports and what remains uncertain.

Strategy — 7 minutes (estimate): teach the five checks: start with the question; identify creator and relevant access; inspect purpose and stated interests; examine evidence and method; check date and trace or compare a claim. Emphasize that no single cue proves a claim, appearance is not evidence, and a source may be useful for one question but limited for another.

Model — 8 minutes (estimate): use the attendance-note card. Ask who made the note and what their stated role is, then ask the narrow question about recorded sign-ins. Think aloud about its dates and stated sign-in-sheet method, the fact the sheets are not attached, and why the note cannot explain attendance or predict a morning meeting.

Guided comparison — 10 minutes (estimate): learners compare the student-council poll with the sponsored BrightStart promotion. Keep the question fixed: which time respondents said could work for them? Ask what the poll can show, who did not reply, and why the sales claim is not supported by the evidence displayed. Do not call a source false merely because it has a sponsor.

Independent evaluation — 10 minutes (estimate): learners compare the current-member sign-up summary with Robin’s bus-route notes. Use the visible task and rubric: explain both sources’ fit, creator/access and evidence; explain one relevant purpose or perspective; then give a bounded conclusion, a limit and a next check. Keep source reasoning separate from personal schedule preference.

Scoring: use the learner rubric, 0–2 for each of four criteria (maximum 8). Score question/source fit, purpose and perspective, evidence/checking, and limits/next step. Do not score preference for before school or after school. Apply the learner descriptors to the independent response: criterion 1 and criterion 3 consider both cards; criterion 2 needs a supported explanation of at least one card’s purpose or perspective; criterion 4 requires a bounded conclusion, relevant limit and useful next check for 2 points, one or two accurate elements for 1, and none for 0. An overbroad conclusion does not meet the conclusion element. A useful check may support both criterion 3 and criterion 4; do not require two different checks. Assess each dimension separately.

Closure — 2 minutes (estimate): ask learners to name one claim a source card supports and one it does not. Reaffirm that credibility is question-specific and a second check may be useful.

Shortened 30-minute option (estimate): opening 2; strategy 5; model 6; guided comparison 7; independent evaluation 8; closure 2. Keep the independent evaluation and neutral rubric; shorten the share-out.

Support: read one source card at a time; let learners underline the question, creator, evidence, and limit; provide the organizer and sentence frames; permit oral rehearsal, dictation, or typing. Do not supply a preferred meeting time.

Extension: evaluate one card against a second, different question. Explain how its usefulness changes, identify an independent record that could corroborate a claim, and revise the conclusion if the new evidence differs.

Common confusions: a sponsor is relevant context but does not alone prove a claim false; a staff title or polished design does not prove it true; old information is not automatically false but may not fit a current question; a first-hand account can be useful for experience and still too limited to represent a group; stated availability is not actual attendance. Accept cautious conclusions tied to evidence.

The source cards are fictional examples for offline practice.

Model — intended evidence: Learner matches the attendance note to the narrow question about recorded attendance, identifies Nia Torres’s stated role as a fictional library assistant, states the four reported sign-in counts, and connects the counts to the stated sign-in-sheet method. The learner does not infer why people attended or predict morning attendance, and recognizes that the unattached sheets may be checked before treating the counts as verified.

Guided practice — intended evidence: Learner explains that the poll is more useful for the question about what its respondents said could work because it gives a specific question, invited group, reply count, and results, while noting voluntary nonresponse and that stated availability is not actual attendance. Learner notes that the sponsored page gives no support for its broad focus claim and proposes an appropriate next check. The learner does not infer falsity solely from sponsorship or design.

Independent response — intended evidence: Learner identifies Nia Torres or her stated library-assistant role and Robin or Robin’s conversations with Route 4 riders; explains the availability form’s 12 replies from 18 current members and the informal conversations with five classmates; and matches each source to the organizing question. Learner explains how at least one source’s purpose or perspective affects its usefulness, limits conclusions about nonrespondents, representation and actual attendance, and proposes a relevant record or broader-response check. Robin reports riders’ experiences; the card does not establish that Robin personally rides Route 4. Schedule preference is not scored.

Answer keys

— key for Model

Nia Torres, identified as a fictional library assistant, made the note. It reports 8, 11, 10, and 9 people signed in at the four listed after-school meetings and says the counts were copied from sign-in sheets.

The source is relevant to the narrow question about what the note reports for those meetings. The counts, dates, and stated record source help explain the basis, but the sheets are not attached. The note does not explain attendance or predict a different schedule.

A learner can say the note is a useful lead but should be checked against the sign-in sheets before relying on exact counts.

Do not treat a staff title alone as proof. Accept careful statements about what the note reports and what it cannot establish.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

— key for Guided practice

For the question about what respondents said could work, the poll is more useful: it states that 48 of 120 invited Grade 6 students replied voluntarily, with 25 choosing after school, 14 before school, and 9 either. It does not show what could work for all 120 students or actual attendance. BrightStart makes a much broader focus claim but gives no method or supporting source and links to a product for sale. Organizers could check the tally and gather input from nonrespondents and current members before choosing.

The poll’s disclosed question and counts make its scope inspectable, while voluntary replies limit generalization. The commercial purpose is relevant context for BrightStart, but does not by itself prove the claim false; the missing method and evidence matter. A badge or attractive design is not evidence.

A learner may say the poll is more useful for what its respondents said could work while requesting a broader or more current check before a decision.

Accept a reasoned critique of either card. Do not score a preference for either meeting time.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

— key for Independent response

Nia Torres’s Card C summarizes a one-question form sent to club members: 12 of 18 replied, with 7 choosing before school, 4 after school and 1 either. It can show those respondents’ stated availability, but six did not reply and availability is not attendance. Robin’s Card D reports informal conversations with five Route 4 riders, four of whom said a morning meeting might be hard because of bus arrival time. Their experience is useful for spotting a travel barrier, but that small group cannot speak for every member. The cards therefore suggest issues to check before a trial, not proof that a before-school meeting will work. I would check the missing tally and the current bus timetable, then ask the nonresponding members about availability.

This six-sentence example identifies both creators, matches the reported availability and travel experience to the question, explains both methods and the riders’ perspective, and gives a bounded conclusion, limits and useful checks. It meets all four current rubric criteria. Robin is the recorder of riders’ reports; do not assume Robin personally rides the route. Learners may prefer any schedule when the reasoning remains supported.

A learner may argue for after school because the bus concern deserves more checking, or consider a before-school trial because some respondents selected it, provided the limits and next checks are stated.

Score source evaluation, evidence, and limits. Do not score which schedule the learner supports.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3, Criterion 4

Scoring criteria and extensions

Criterion 1 — scoring criterion

Matches both independent sources to the question and accurately identifies each creator or relevant access. Example: Uses Card C for current club members' stated availability, not as proof of attendance. Alternatives: Accept another source-question match when the learner explains what that source directly records.

Criterion 2 — scoring criterion

Explains how at least one source's stated purpose, interest or perspective affects what it can support, without inventing motives. Example: Notes the BrightStart shop link when weighing its unsupported product-related claim. Alternatives: A sponsor or first-hand role is one factor; it does not by itself prove a claim true or false.

Criterion 3 — scoring criterion

Accurately explains both independent sources' method, sample or source trail and proposes a useful date, record or comparison check. Example: Notes the poll's voluntary replies and suggests checking a broader response before a school-wide choice. Alternatives: Accept a different relevant check, such as the unattached tally sheet or bus timetable.

Criterion 4 — scoring criterion

Gives a conclusion within the source evidence, names a relevant limit and identifies a useful next check. Example: Says the sign-up summary suggests some respondents could attend before school but does not predict attendance by all members. Alternatives: Do not score a preference for before school or after school; score the source reasoning. Apply the learner rubric: all three accurate, relevant elements earn 2; only one or two earn 1; none earn 0.

Support (Independent response): Read one card at a time, use the independent organizer, mark the question/creator/evidence/limit, and allow oral rehearsal, dictation, or typing without revealing a preferred schedule.

Extension (Independent response): Apply one source to a different question, identify evidence that could independently corroborate a claim, and explain how a new result would change the conclusion.

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Response teaching: Evaluate a Web Source’s Credibility

Evaluate each source for a fixed question through creator/access, purpose, method/evidence, date and source trail; conclude within its limits and propose a useful check.

After the original C/D evaluation, use this route when a learner ranks sources by appearance or authority alone, confuses replies with attendance, or omits limits/checks. First clarify the question and access. Model the difference between the repair-log question and brand reliability. Guide B/C by making one line per source: question fit, creator/access, purpose, evidence/method, date, missing record. Ask how both sources can matter rather than announcing a winner. Put practice away before D/E; reserve F/G for later. All records are constructed, so proposed source checks are plans, not actual verifications of real records.

Planning estimates: preparation 5 minutes; model 4, guided pair 8–10, fresh evaluation 8. Split the check from instruction if needed; retain both cards and all source checks.

Use the separate response-teaching, fresh-check and later-check files linked below. Keep the checks aside until the indicated stage. Read-aloud, dictation and other agreed routes can preserve the reasoning target; record the route. These tasks do not assess independent reading when read aloud, and are not validated equivalent tests.

Response teaching — model and guided practice

Reserve: different check after response teaching

Reserve for another occasion: later check

Response practice, fresh check and later check — answer guidance

B/C: the secretary’s 12 replies report 8 afternoon/4 morning among 20 invited members; 8 nonresponses and no attendance trial limit the claim. The caretaker’s claimed calendar access flags two booked afternoons, not every room or afternoon. Both October 8 dates may fit the upcoming decision, but check the actual intended dates. Request tally and hall calendar, ask nonrespondents and examine other suitable rooms before a bounded trial. Do not convert job title into verified accuracy.

D/E: the secretary reports 6 lunch/4 after-school choices among 10 replies to 16 invitations. Six missing replies and stated choice versus attendance matter. The coordinator’s calendar-based room note directly concerns access; its purpose is a constraint check, not a preference or learning study. Both are dated November 1, but verify the specific trial Monday/calendar and original tally, ask missing members and check other rooms if needed. A Monday lunch trial might be considered, not guaranteed successful. Accept a different schedule recommendation supported by these distinctions.

F/G: the sales claim has no supporting method, count or trail, and the 2023 date may not fit current members. Selling kits is a stated interest, not proof of falsehood. The volunteer has access to seven conversations and reports three transport barriers, but not all 22 members or actual attendance. If accurately reported, these barriers weigh against ‘easier for all’; the card alone is not a verified transport survey. Check original notes, current members’ availability/transport and the specific date. The unexplained badge contributes no evidence for universal suitability. Do not require a single recommendation or exact wording.

Fictional response examples — for teacher interpretation

These invented responses illustrate evidence to notice; they are not observations of actual learners or diagnostic ability labels.

Sound: “The secretary’s October 8 form reports afternoon choices from 8 of 12 respondents, not attendance by all 20 members. The caretaker’s calendar note flags two booked afternoons, not all rooms. I would inspect the tally and intended-date calendar, ask missing members and consider a trial only when a room and attendance route fit.” Connects each source’s access/method and purpose to the decision with limits/checks. It does not verify the invented records or prove program effectiveness. Use D/E for new individual evidence.

Partial: “Eight chose afternoon, but the hall is booked sometimes. Check the calendar.” Relevant details and one useful check are visible. Prompt for creators/access, purpose, 12 of 20 and the missing tally, and what choices cannot show. Then use D/E independently.

Plausible-error: “The caretaker is an adult so that source proves the club cannot meet in the afternoon.” Treats status as proof and generalizes two bookings to every afternoon/room. Return to the exact method, dates and unchecked rooms; contrast that with the actual narrow claim, then reconstruct B/C and use D/E unseen.