

# Research Triage

## Hospital Triage:

assessing and sorting of patients (as in an emergency room) according to the urgency of their need for care



## Research Triage:

assessing and sorting of sources according to their usability and relevancy to a research goal

**Research Triage** involves the decision-making process when searching for research sources to use in your paper or project. Whether you are finding sources from a list of search results on a screen or on a shelf in the library, you must decide what sources to collect for deeper consideration and possible use.

**Evaluate possible sources with an end in mind**—that is, in the context of the argument you are devising. That means you need to consider each potential source in relation to:

a) your general topic, b) your research question, c) your insight or evolving theories of meaning, and d) how you might use the source for your argument.

## What to look at?

### In General

- Title
- Author
- Date
- Publication source
- Description/Summary

### For Articles

- Abstract
- Introduction/Conclusion
- Graphs charts
- References

### For Books

- Table of contents
- First and last chapters
- Index
- Bibliography/references

## From First Glance to Captured Source (Useful For Your Paper)

### Level I Triage = On-the-Spot Decision

**Does this source look relevant and useful?**

- No – No relevance: move on to something else
- Yes - Source Has Potential: Collect for Closer Review (Level II Triage)

### Level II Triage = Collect for Closer Review (Source has potential)

**Does this source have information I could really use in my paper/project?**

- Save it - download, print or email it to yourself. Record the citation and how you found it
- Read further and take notes. What do you see that might be used for your argument?
- Does it agree or disagree with your argument? Support or refute your point?
- Give it a rating or score. (Using a scale of 1-3: 3 = best, 2 = fair, 1 = poor)
- Decide if this source is useful—go on to Level III Triage

### Level III Triage = Evaluate the Source Using the 5Ws

**Is this source credible enough to use or not? ([Use the 5Ws Guide](#))**

- Do quick research to check out the authority, accuracy, and reliability of this source.

### Admitted: Decide to Keep the Source for Use in Your Paper/Project

**This source is central to my argument, point, question or thesis. Keep it! (or not)**

- Read it closely to learn and find content to use in your paper. ([See Read-to-Write Guide](#))

## The Three Levels of Research Triage: Comparing Searching for Books vs. Searching for Electronic Sources

Because you only want to “admit” sources that you really might use into the effort of close reading and analysis.

	<b>Books</b>	<b>Electronic</b>	<b>E.g. # of Sources</b>
<b>Level 1—Quick Review and Collection</b>	Scan book shelves, pull down books for quick review, add to pile of books in your arms	Quick scan of hits from keyword searching in databases or on the web --collect possible sources bookmarked or saved in folders	8
<b>Level 2—Closer Review for Collection and More Thorough Read</b>	Take pile of books to a table and skim through them more closely to pick out which one's seem good enough to check out	Go back and review possible sources, download them, and decide which ones you will read entirely and more closely	4
<b>Level 3—Read Source More Thoroughly and Decide to Use or Not</b>	Check out the book, take it home, and read it more thoroughly. Decide if it is central to your paper or not	Print the sources you decide look good and read them closely to decide if you will use it in your paper	3