

Checking for bias in your sources – Transcript

Be in the habit of questioning the information that is presented by to you.

Most academic writing aims to be fair-minded, with evidence given for and against a point of view.

Bias is not always obvious and it does not always mean that your source is prejudiced or deliberately dishonest; it may be that some other factors, such as political or economic interests, have hidden part of the story.

When people or organisations have a strong interest in an outcome, such as campaigning for the survival of a hospital, the evidence they present may be accurate but incomplete.

Consciously or unconsciously, they may select and emphasise the points that support their own views, leading to a reporting bias.

In some societies, people might face serious consequences if they expressed certain ideas.

When reading a text written under such circumstances, be aware that the writer may have lacked the freedom to give the complete picture.

Wealthy individuals and organisations often have more opportunities to publicise their views, and are able to carry out research to support matters that interest them.

Individuals and smaller organisations may find it hard to fund the work needed to investigate an alternative point of view.

Think about who has access to resources and information, and the circumstances and settings in which a piece of work is produced.

Note:

- Question the information that is presented to you
- There may be evidence that supports an alternative view but is not represented
- If information is missing, it may be for reasons of practicality rather than an intended bias
- You should always be aware of the limitations in the reported information