

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 in 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 = Keep the Source for Use in Your Paper/Project

This source is central to my argument, point, question or thesis.

- If the source is central to your point, then annotate it and highlight quotes you may use.
- Follow the sources in the References or Works Cited to find additional information.
- Confirm accuracy and authority.