

Exhaustive Source Research Paper

Using one of the authors of one of our example essays, or one of the sources they cite, write a four or more page paper in MLA format where you explore their background and qualifications. Please note that someone can be a very good source without all of the qualifications I ask about, and they can be an acceptable one even with a red flag or two.

Look at their qualifications:

1. Are they educated in the field that they discuss? Did they get their education from a reputable institution?
2. Are they experienced in their field? Did they work in it? Have they researched it? Have they interacted with it in some other way over time?
3. Do they have personal, anecdotal evidence about the topic? This can be highly biased, but also highly compelling to an audience. Eye witness testimony from a credible source can carry a great deal of weight.

Look at their credibility and their ethical appeal regarding their expertise:

1. When they make assertions, do they provide evidence from other, credible sources (experts should always be willing to make statements like “I know this because...” followed by evidence—which doesn’t mean they always will).
2. Do they “stay in their lane”? In other words, does the political scientist stick to politics, or does he portray himself as an expert on, say, medical issues as well?
3. How do they make their living? If they are paid for their expertise (most people are, this isn’t bad in and of itself), does it seem to bias their understanding of the issue? Is there evidence to this effect?
4. Is their position an “outlier”? While it is still just barely possible for one lone genius to be right about some obscure point, and the rest of their position to be wrong, the way that science works today this should be extremely unlikely, and in the long run, most such “lone geniuses” turn out to be cranks & charlatans.

Look for other red flags:

1. Does this person have other characteristics that might make them less than trustworthy? Do they have a history of lying, plagiarism, fraud or general criminality that may make us want to think twice about taking them seriously?
2. Do they have a history of being right or wrong in their public pronouncements?
3. (& while this shouldn’t make their point of view automatically wrong), do they hold noxious views or engage in acts which most people would find repugnant that might reduce their ability to convince a large and diverse audience (are they a racist, sexist or homophobe? Are they a blatant hypocrite? Have they been found guilty of spousal or child abuse, stalking, etc.?)?

This paper should have at least four sources, all of which are used in writing the paper & listed in the Works Cited page.