Credibility

There's so much information around these days, it's hard to know what's credible or trustworthy. So you're going to have to look very carefully at sources to work out what's believable, and what's not.

Say you're researching climate change. Well, you're going to find a flood of information very quickly.

This is where 'RURU' can really help. It stands for Relevant, Up-to-date, Reliable and Useful.

If you're researching tidal energy, it might be helpful to find articles about how the moon affects tides. But if an article goes on to explain in depth how lunar craters are named, it's no longer relevant to your project, even if it is interesting. Only seek out the information you really need, and don't get distracted.

Always ask, "When was this published?" Try to get hold of the most recent research possible. Things change fast, and sometimes something published just a few years, or even only a few months ago, might be out of date today.

Some articles say that climate change is the biggest problem the world is facing, whilst others say that climate change isn't a problem at all. They can't all be right. So it's crucial to be able to decide which sources are reliable, and that's not easy.

Reliable information doesn't have a particular taste or smell. You need to think critically by asking, "Where has this information come from?"

A blog, or an official website? Anybody can write a blog, so how reliable is it really? Somebody's probably written a blog explaining why all penguins are evil. That doesn't necessarily make it true.

If it's the site of an organisation, for example a news outlet, a university, a government or a private company, it might well mean the website is very official and impressive. But does that make it trustworthy?

Sources can often have hidden agendas, or reasons for posting information that you might not be aware of unless you do your research.

If you read an article about how climate change isn't real and how fossil fuels are the future, and it's been published by an oil company, then that should ring some alarm bells over its reliability.

What you're really looking for is organisations that always list their sources, so that you can double-check them. Universities are a good example, as are

official government websites, or famous science institutions. For instance, nearly all scientists agree that the most trustworthy evidence about climate change can be found on the NASA website.

Information may well be reliable, up-to-date and relevant, but will it actually be useful for your research?

Question everything, check whatever you can, and you'll produce a project that's based on solid research, unless the penguins get to you first.