The 5Ws method is an alternative to other acronyms, such as CRAAP (Blakelsey, 2004) and CRITIC (Bartz, 2002; Matthys & Hemke, 2004), used to help students learn evaluation skills.

The 5Ws evaluation method builds on students’ existing knowledge. It is an instructional scaffold that introduces the basic process of evaluating a source, and includes advanced questions to challenge students to conduct more in-depth evaluations.

**Responses (N=172)**

- **Author** lived in Japan and knows their “Credible author, credible newspaper…”
- Only 16% column

**Document Strengths, According to Students**

- “I learned a decided and award-winning journalist.”
- “Credit author, credible newspaper…”
- “[Author] lived in Japan and knows [his] subject…”

**Document’s Weaknesses, According to Students**

- “There are not a lot of sources.”
- “Conclusions are entirely opinionated.”
- “No scholarly research or data.”

**FALL 2012 IN-CLASS STUDENT ACTIVITY**

**STUDENT ANSWERS TO THE 5 WS**

- Responses indicate that students were able to effectively evaluate sources using the 5Ws method.
- Incorrect answers show a lack of understanding with scholarly publication jargon – words such as “research study,” “methodology,” and “abstract” were unknown or confusing to many of the students.
- Defining publication terms was not part of the session, but results indicate a student learning gap that needs to be addressed.

**Post-Session Student Survey**

**Student Recall & Use**

- 85% (N=69) of students reported that they evaluated their sources for at least one assignment during the semester.

**English Instructor Survey**

**Value to & Use by Instructors**

About the 5Ws, English 101 instructors wrote:

- “[I]t was clear and easy way to remember how to check a source’s credibility.”
- “Research can be overwhelming, but asking basic questions helps break down [students’] task into smaller parts.”
- “Reminded students of something familiar ‘...while moving them forward into new territory...”

**Summary: Why the 5Ws?**

- Can be introduced in a single instruction session
- May be utilized outside of the library by course instructors
- Builds on previous knowledge; students know the framework and can jump right into the evaluation
- Useful as a small group activity
- Appropriate for multiple research levels
- Applicable to a variety of resource types
- Acknowledges “gray areas” – scholars can write opinion pieces, not everything in a newspaper is written by journalists, etc.