Source Sleuth

Search carefully, check evidence, and credit every source.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.8 "Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the two precise search terms. Circle three details that help Maya judge a source's credibility or accuracy, and box the information she records for a citation.

Cooling a City Research Project

1. When Maya researched how city trees affect summer heat, she did not search only "trees." She tried "urban tree shade surface temperature" and "city tree canopy heat island." Those precise terms led her to a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration page explaining that paved areas absorb and release heat, helping create urban heat islands. Maya recorded the page title, organization, publication date, URL, and the date she viewed it. These details would help her create a citation and find the source again.

2. Next, Maya compared two sources. She found a neighborhood blog that claimed trees lower every street by 20 degrees, but it named no study or author. She set it aside. A U.S. Forest Service fact sheet identified its agency, authors, and sources, so Maya considered it more credible. She also checked whether the fact sheet supported its own claim. It reported that tree shade can reduce surface temperatures, not that every location changes by the same amount. Checking evidence and wording helped Maya avoid repeating an exaggerated conclusion.

3. Instead of copying a sentence from the fact sheet, Maya wrote her own version of its idea: Tree shade may cool pavement surfaces. She placed a citation after the paraphrase so readers could see where the information came from. In MLA style, a web citation can include the author or organization, page title, website name, URL, and access date. For quoted words, Maya would use quotation marks and cite the source. A citation gives credit, but changing only a few words is not a real paraphrase.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which two search terms did Maya use, and why were they more useful than searching only “trees”?

2. Why did Maya decide that the neighborhood blog was not a strong source for her report?

3. How did Maya check whether the Forest Service fact sheet was accurate, not just credible?

4. What should Maya do when she uses exact words from a source, and why must she cite a paraphrase?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a research question about a school or community issue. In 80 to 110 words, give two specific search terms, identify two sources and one credibility check for each, then write a paraphrase from one source followed by an MLA-style web citation.

ANSWER KEY

Source Sleuth

GRADE 7 · WHST.6-8.8

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the two precise search terms. Circle three details that help Maya judge a source's credibility or accuracy, and box the information she records for a citation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which two search terms did Maya use, and why were they more useful than searching only "trees"?	**She used "urban tree shade surface temperature" and "city tree canopy heat island." They were more useful because they named a specific topic and helped her find relevant information.**
2	Why did Maya decide that the neighborhood blog was not a strong source for her report?	**The blog made a broad claim that trees lower every street by 20 degrees, but it named no author or study.**
3	How did Maya check whether the Forest Service fact sheet was accurate, not just credible?	**She checked whether the fact sheet supported its claim and noticed that it said tree shade can reduce surface temperatures, not that every location changes by the same amount.**
4	What should Maya do when she uses exact words from a source, and why must she cite a paraphrase?	**For exact words, she should use quotation marks and cite the source. She cites a paraphrase to show where the information came from and give credit to the source.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My question is, How can families waste less food? I would search "ways families reduce food waste EPA" and "USDA food storage tips." My first source is the EPA page "Reducing Wasted Food at Home." It is credible because the EPA is a federal agency. My second source is USDA's FoodKeeper, which is credible because it gives storage guidance from USDA and Cornell University. The EPA explains that planning meals and storing food correctly can keep usable food from being discarded (United States Environmental Protection Agency). United States Environmental Protection Agency. "Reducing Wasted Food at Home." EPA, www.epa.gov/recycle/reducing-wasted-food-home. Accessed 4 Aug. 2026.

Accept equivalent explanations that use passage evidence about precise searches, source evidence, accurate claims, paraphrasing, and citations. For Part 3, accept different topics and citation styles if the student identifies two usable sources, assesses each source, paraphrases without copying, and gives source credit.