



Questions to Consider When Evaluating the Research Basis of
Commercially Available Textbooks

When considering textbooks for purchase or adoption, program teachers and administrators may want to review the books with a critical eye and try to find answers to the following questions:

1. Is there a teacher's guide to the textbook? (The teacher's guide generally identifies the research on which the learning strategies in the text are based.)
2. Is the content of the text, particularly the learning strategies, based on research?
 - a. If so, does either the book's foreword or teacher's guide identify the research basis?
 - b. Who sponsored the research (a credible research institution)?
 - c. What was the sample size? (should be a good-sized sample, i.e., not fewer than 10 people)
 - d. Was the research conducted on an adult population?
 - e. What is the date of the research (Is the research recent or is it more than 15 years old)?
3. Are the book's learning objectives derived from or connected to research?
 - a. Is this explicitly stated in the text or the teacher's guide?
 - b. Are objectives calibrated to state or national standards?
4. Is there a bibliography or resource list that provides full references to the research studies on which the text was based?
5. What was the book's development process (and is it described in either the teacher's guide or the foreword to the text)?
 - a. How were the book's scope and sequence determined?
 - b. How was the book reviewed and by whom? (should be credible adult education practitioners)
 - c. Were there multiple reviewers?
 - d. Was there consistency across reviewers' comments?
 - e. What criteria were used by reviewers concerning the research basis of the materials?
 - f. Was the final draft of the book piloted, using an adult student population?
 - g. Were changes to the materials made, based on information learned during the pilot, before publication?