Evaluating Sources
Better known as the CRAAP test

When you are using information for research, it’s important that you evaluate your sources. This checklist may be a helpful way to approach evaluation.

CURRENCY

When was it created? How old/new is it?
Some topics must be based on the latest information. Others require a long-view perspective. For some, currency doesn’t matter.

- The information is current.
- Currency does not matter.
- Currency is important for this topic.
- A historical perspective is important.

RELEVANCE

What kind of information do you need?
Some sources are more appropriate than others depending on your research need. It is up to you identify which source is appropriate for your project. The Research Help Desk will help you identify the resources below if you aren’t sure how and why they are created and used. A combination of scholarly and non-scholarly sources is preferred in most research.

- Preliminary overview (encyclopedia/dictionary/reference article)
- Scholarly sources (books/journal articles)
- Peer-reviewed sources are sometimes a requirement (found in journal databases)
- Non-scholarly sources (magazines, blogs, newspapers, websites)

AUTHORITY

Who wrote it?
The author of the information (person or organization) should have knowledge of the topic and/or expertise in analyzing and presenting information.

- Full name ________________________________
- Expertise ________________________________
- Affiliation ______________________________
- Domain (.com, .gov, .org, .edu) ________________
ACCURACY

Is it accurate?
Evaluating accuracy can be both a skill and an art. It’s largely detective work. You have to decide where to look, what clues to search for, and what to accept. Don’t be tempted to take what you find at face value. The habit of evaluating effectively is of lifelong utility.

☐ Expertise of author is stated.
☐ Sources are cited.
☐ Cited sources are referred to in article!
☐ The article appears in a reputable journal or platform.
☐ The information is well-edited—free of errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and sentence sense.
☐ The facts can be confirmed elsewhere.

AUDIENCE

WHO is the audience?
We added an additional and, we think, important A to the CRAAP test. The intended readers impact the quality, scope, and knowledge assumptions of what is presented. The more general the audience, the more general the information. And conversely, the more specific the audience (e.g., practitioners), the more focused and detailed the information.

☐ Anyone (general reader)
☐ Researchers or professionals
☐ Members of a trade or industry (e.g., educators)
☐ Special interest groups defined by age, gender, beliefs, nationality, race

PURPOSE

WHY did they write it?
A piece of information may be created with any of several goals in mind.

☐ To inform
☐ To persuade
☐ To sell something
☐ To entertain
☐ Something else _______________________________