Evaluating Information Found on the Web: The CRAAP Test

Is the information that you get from ‘Googling’ accurate and reliable?

Anyone, anytime, anywhere, can put information on the web and make it available to online researchers. The Web contains all of the following: useful information, incorrect or outdated information, advertisements, news, entertainment, advocacy, and propaganda.

In order to figure out if the web page you want to use is appropriate for a research assignment, you can give it the **CRAAP Test**:

**Currency:** The timeliness of the information.
- When was the information published or posted?
- Is the information current or out-of-date for your topic?
- Are the links functional?

**Relevance:** The importance of the information for your needs.
- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level for your needs? (not too elementary nor too advanced)

**Authority:** The source of the information.
- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
  Look at the beginning or the end of the document to find the name of the author and/or the company or organization responsible for the information. You may have to click on links such as “About This Site” or “Home.”
- Is biographical information about the author available? If there is no author’s name, can you readily find information about the company or organization that owns the page?
- Is the author qualified to write about this topic? Is he or she affiliated with a university, institution, or group with a reputation for accuracy in the field? Does he or she have degrees, training, or experience in the field?
- What is its reputation of the company or organization? Does it have a stake in the issue being addressed?
- Does the URL (address of the page) reveal anything about the author or source?
  - **.com:** Commercial enterprise. Commercial sites include company sites with information about and advertisements for their products and services ([www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)); online magazines and newspapers ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)); and Web sites or blogs of individuals that are hosted by commercial online services ([http://waxedredthreads.blogspot.com](http://waxedredthreads.blogspot.com)).
  - **.gov:** U. S. governmental body. Government sites include information prepared by governmental branches, departments, and agencies ([www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)).
o .edu: Educational institution. Educational sites include information about colleges and universities (www.umd.edu); Web pages of departments & student groups; Web pages of individual faculty & students.
o .org: Non-profit organization. Nonprofit sites can contain either useful unbiased information (www.apa.org) or just one side of an issue (www.nra.org).
o .net: Group that is part of a network. Network sites include individuals and groups who have a Web site through a network (www.slideshare.net).

Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the informational content.
- What is the source of the information? Are claims supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed (or "refereed") by other experts in that field?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Are there spelling, grammar, or other typographical errors?

Purpose: The reason the information exists, and how it is being presented.
- What is the purpose of the information (e.g., to teach, sell, entertain, or persuade)?
- Is the information based on fact or opinion?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?

Some additional guidelines:
- Qualities of Good Scholarship: clear, well-written; calm and objective tone; balanced and reasoned presentation; accurate presentation of facts; all sources are documented.
- Qualities of Poor Scholarship: bad grammar and misspellings; sweeping generalizations; uses emotional appeals; excessive claims of certainty; no documentation of sources.

Need more help? Call or ask at the service desk!
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