



MacOdrum Library

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Evaluating online information: Use the CRAP test

All information found online should be critically evaluated because there is no guarantee that it is reliable or accurate.

Use this four-part test to determine the credibility of information you want to use. The “top indicators” in each section are a checklist for determining if online information is current, reliable, authoritative and biased.

Use this four-part test to determine the credibility of information you want to use:

Currency (Is the information up-to-date?)

- How recent is the information?
 - How recently has the website been updated?
- Is the website modified regularly?
 - Is the information current enough for your research?

Checklist for up-to-date information

- Site or page date
 - Is the date of publication or last revision published (often at the bottom of the page)?
 - When was the site or page last updated?
 - Is the information out-of-date?

Reliability (Is the information trustworthy?)

- Is this web page intended for elementary or high school students?
 - If so, is it the best site to refer to when writing a university-level research paper?
- Has the information passed through any peer reviewing process?

- Sources?
 - Has the author(s) documented his/her sources by including a reference list?
 - Is the information reproduced from another site. If so, which one?
 - If applicable, when were the sources published?

Checklist for reliable information

- Evidence of the peer review process (e.g., in an "About us" or editorial statement)
- A bibliography or reference list

Authority (Is the author credible?)

- Who is the creator or author of the website or web page
 - E.g., a recognized individual or organization/government?
- What are his/her/its credentials
 - E.g., is the individual author or organization known in the field?
- Has the author published other material(s)?
- Does the author provide contact information (e.g., email address or phone number) in case you want to verify the information?
- Who is the publisher or sponsor?
 - Can you determine if he/she/the organization has a good reputation?

Checklist for authoritative information

- **Author's credentials**
 - Look for information about the author of the site or page.
 - Is the author qualified to publish on this topic?
 - E.g., Can you identify the author's education and relevant professional experience?
 - Look up the author's name the [Carleton University Library catalogue](#) or Wikipedia
- **URL**
 - Read the uniform resource locator (URL) carefully to determine if you are reading someone's personal page.
 - You need to investigate the author carefully because personal pages have no publisher or domain owner to vouch for the information.

- **Domain**
 - Is the domain extension appropriate for the content?
 - Government sites: .gov
 - Educational sites: edu.
 - Nonprofit organizations: .org
- **Publisher**
 - Identify the publisher (individual or organization) of the site or page.
 - The publisher operates the server computer from which the site or page is issued. Do you know anything about the publisher?
- **"About us" links**
 - Read the information on the site or page about the author and/or publisher.
 - This could be under "about us," "philosophy," "background," or "bibliography" tabs.
- **Page design or structure**
 - Page design is not always an indicator of credibility but if a site or page is easy to navigate, you'll be able to assess the information more easily.

Purpose/Point of view (Is the information objective?)

- What is the purpose or point of view of the site?
 - Is the information primarily fact or opinion?
 - Does the point of view seem balanced and/or objective (e.g., presents more than one perspective)?
- What is the publisher's interest (if any) in this information?
 - Does the site try to persuade, advocate, entertain, or sell a product?
 - Is there advertising on the site?

Checklist for objective information

- **"About us" links**
 - Read the information on the site or page about the author and/or publisher.
 - This could be under "about us" or "philosophy", "background" or "bibliography" tabs.
 - Is there advertising?

- **Cross reference information**
 - Look up some of the references in [Google Scholar](#) (through the Carleton University Library).

Overall CRAP test checklist

Currency

- Site or page date
 - Is the date of publication or last revision published (often at the bottom of the page)?
 - How out-of-date is the information?

Reliability

- Evidence of the peer review process (e.g., in an "About us" or editorial statement)
- A bibliography or reference list

Authority

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- **Author's credentials**
 - Look for information about the author of the site or page.
 - Is the author qualified to publish on this topic?
 - E.g, Can you identify the author's education and relevant professional experience?

- Look up the author's name in Google, Wikipedia or the [Carleton University Library catalogue](#).
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The original CRAP test is courtesy of the University of Waterloo.