

How to Evaluate Resources (the CRAAP Test)

When you are trying to figure out if a source is appropriate to use, there's an easy way to check: CRAAP! CRAAP stands for the 5 things we are looking for in a source: currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose.

Currency refers to the date when a source was created, either when an article or book was published, or when a website was last updated.

The date of publication or creation may or may not matter for everything you're researching, but it is important to know if you need something current.

Relevance is probably the one that you are going to think to look for first: namely, does this information relate to the topic I want to write about?

It also deals with if the information is written at the right level – most likely academic– and who the intended audience is.

Authority asks who wrote and published the article.

Most articles should include the credentials of their author, sometimes the institute or department where they work, and in some cases contact information.

The next letter stands for accuracy. You want to make sure the work you are pulling information from is legitimate.

And that any claims that work makes are supported by evidence. The easiest way to check this is to look at who the article cited.

Make sure they are using academic sources, or at least legitimate ones.

The final criterion is the purpose of the article.

Think about why it was written, and what the author wants to accomplish.

Some authors or publishers might only present one side of an argument, meaning that they are biased to present information in a specific way.

Keep this in mind when choosing sources.

After looking through these criteria, you should have a better idea if your source is acceptable or not!

Just remember – the more research you do, the easier evaluating resources will get!