2.3: Evaluating sources

- Do you evaluate information you find online or elsewhere before using it in your writing?
- What parts of evaluating sources do you find challenging? What parts are easy?
- What things do you look for to decide whether to use a source?

This section talks about how to identify relevant and credible sources that you have found online and through searches of library databases and catalogs, Google Scholar, and other specialized databases. Relevant, credible sources will meet the information needs of your research project.

Evaluating your sources is critical to the process of research. The CRAAP test allows you analyze your sources and determine if they are appropriate for your research or just plain crap! The CRAAP test uses a series of questions that address specific evaluation criteria like the authority and purpose of the source. This test should be used for all your sources and it is not intended to make you exclude your sources, but to help you to analyze how you intend to use them to support your own arguments.

C = Currency: The timeliness of the information.
- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?

R = 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 (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
• Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use?
• Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research paper?

A = Authority: The source of the information.

• What are the author’s credentials or organizational affiliations?
• Is the author qualified to write on the topic? Do you trust the author?
• Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address?
• Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? examples: .ca .com .edu .gov .org .net

A= Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness and correctness of the content.

• Where does the information come from?
• Is the information supported by evidence?
• Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
• Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
• Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
• Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors?

P = Purpose: The reason the information exists.

• What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade?
• Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
• Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda?
• Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
• Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases?

Attributions

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