

Evaluating Resources: Is Your Research CRAAP?

1. Introduction

1.1 Start

Evaluating Resources: Is Your Research CRAAP?

1.2 Welcome

Welcome to the *Evaluating Resources: Is Your Research CRAAP?* tutorial. You can listen to or view the contents of this tutorial on the left menu. To navigate forward click the NEXT button located in the bottom right hand corner of this screen.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this tutorial you will be able to:

- Recognize the value of evaluating sources used in research papers, projects and posters

- Use the CRAAP test to evaluate sources by looking at
 - Currency
 - Relevancy
 - Authority
 - Accuracy
 - Purpose

2. CRAAP Test

2.1 CRAAP Evaluation Test

The CRAAP evaluation test allows you to find the best possible sources for your research paper, project or poster.

Using the CRAAP test as a framework will help you learn how to evaluate sources based on five criteria:

- Is the source current to the topic?
- Is it relevant to your research?
- Does the source have authority behind it?
- Is the information contained accurate?
- And what is the source's purpose?

In this tutorial we will discuss each criteria individually, but keep in mind that the criteria often overlap, which you will see as we proceed.

2.2 Letter C - Current

The first letter of CRAAP is C and stands for current. Questions to consider about the currency of a source include:

- When was the information published or posted?
- Has it been revised or updated if it is older?
- Is the information up to date for your topic?
- Are the links contained functional?

2.3 Example of Current

For instance, take a look at this article from June of 2016. Notice that it is not only current, but that it also discusses recent research findings about the risks involved with genetically modified foods. That is as opposed to...

...this article, which was retrieved in the same search. Notice that it is 25 years old at this point! You can see in the abstract that the information is out of date for the topic.

This article definitely doesn't pass the C in the CRAAP test! For this topic you need the most current resources.

2.4 Letter R - Relevant

Next in our CRAAP framework is the R, which stands for Relevant. Questions to consider in evaluating a resource for relevancy are:

- Does the information relate to my topic or answer my research question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources and chosen this one as a good one?
- Are you comfortable using this resource for your paper?

Make sure you have reviewed your sources carefully and not settled for just the first handful you find. Take some time to identify the most relevant ones for your needs.

2.5 The Research Question

To demonstrate examining how relevant a source is let's create this research question:

Should labeling on genetically modified foods be required?

2.6 Example of Relevant

Take a look at this article. The author discusses the topic directly, as well as talks about a manufacturer's efforts to get the government to impose labeling laws. The article is also current! Of course a deeper look is a good idea, but we are on the right track with this one.

That is as opposed to this one! Sure, it's current, which is great. But take a closer look at the abstract and title for the article. Rather than discussing GMO labeling, this article is focused on litigation involving food. The last article fails the R in CRAAP test quickly, as it does not answer our question or relate to the topic.

2.7 Test What You've Learned

(Drag and Drop, 10 points, 3 attempts permitted)

Test what you've learned about establishing **currency** and **relevancy**.

Drag and drop the concepts that help establish currency and relevancy and put them in the CRAAP box

Drag Item	Drop Target
Date published	Picture 1
Author's name	
Functional links	Picture 1
Only source found	
Intended audience	Picture 1
Answers research question	Picture 1
Desperation	

2.8 Letter A - Authority

Now, let's take a look at the first A in CRAAP. This A represents Authority. When talking about authority we are really referring to the author. Consider these factors in evaluating sources for authority:

- Who is the author and what is the source of the information?
- What are the author's credentials?
- What are the author's qualifications?
- Is there contact information?
- Remember: authority comes from **CONTEXT**

2.9 Example of Authority

Let's say you wanted to write a research paper examining the riots that took place in Ferguson, MO in the fall of 2014.

This article from *USA Today*, a national newspaper, has a byline that indicates the author appears to be affiliated with the newspaper. The article was written during the riots, making it current, and the information presented relates to the topic, making it relevant. Sure looks like this one passes the CRAAP test, doesn't it?

An article from a nationally recognized mainstream newspaper can generally be considered authoritative and safe to use. Reputable newspapers strive for objectivity and the reporters are usually trained professionals.

2.10 Authority in the News

Not every news source has the same degree of authority or objectivity. Look at this article from a news site called *InfoWars*. *InfoWars* is not well known like *USA Today*, therefore, it is important that you read this article carefully and find out who is producing it.

The question of authority is similar to the issue of purpose and bias in the next two examples. The title of this article gives us clues as to the writer's point of view when it says, "Media launches new demonization campaign..." The word

“demonization” in this CONTEXT is a value term that should warn you that the author might not be completely objective.

According to his website, Alex Jones, the founder of *InfoWars* is “dedicated to libertarian and constitutionalist ideas...while vehemently opposing...the globalist threat to national sovereignty”. This implies a certain political stance that may affect Mr. Jones’ reporting and analysis.

2.11 Another Look at Authority in the News

Looking at another article about Ferguson on the website, *The Daily Kos*, reinforces the need to read carefully and investigate the author and/or the source.

The article by Barbara Morrill, the site’s managing editor, gives us a clue as to her point of view when she writes “four days after police gunned down an unarmed 18 year old...” Like the previous article, the words GUNNED DOWN are value terms that should warn you that the author might not be completely objective.

According to the “About” section, the *Daily Kos* self-describes itself as “a news organization, community and activist hub” and the “largest progressive site in the United States”. Again, this implies a certain political stance that may affect reporting and analysis.

When reviewing web resources in particular as potential research sources, it is important to check who is sponsoring the information.

Depending on your purpose, use sources like these with caution and be ready to explain to your readers what the author’s bias is!

2.12 Authority in Social Media

There can be different types of authority.

With a topic such as Ferguson, where eye-witness accounts were documented by social media, *Twitter* or *Instagram* can also be potentially valuable sources

because of their CONTEXT.

Using the CRAAP test will help you make decisions when it comes to using the best possible sources.

2.13 Letter A - Accuracy

The second A in the CRAAP framework stands for accuracy. Questions to consider in evaluating the accuracy of a source include these:

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has it been peer-reviewed?
- Can it be verified in another source?
- Is it deeply biased?
- Are there spelling or grammar errors?

2.14 Accuracy

As we look at accuracy, let's consider the search on genetically modified foods for a moment.

Remember that we kind of liked this article upon first glance? However, when we look at the record we see that this is an opinion article.

Opinion articles tend to take a stand in supporting one side of an argument, they are often not peer-reviewed and may not be supported by evidence.

To determine the accuracy, read the article carefully before deciding if it truly fulfills the requirements of a good piece of evidence for your research.

2.15 Accuracy 2.0

Let's contrast the previous article with this scholarly journal article on the same topic.

This research study looked at the attitudes of college students towards genetically modified foods and how their views could be impacted with information. The study discussed in the article was written by experts in the field and has been peer-reviewed, which also adds to its accuracy.

It is also current, relevant, AND those who did the study have a level of authority.

2.16 Letter P - Purpose

The final part of the CRAAP test is purpose.

Questions to ask yourself about purpose when looking at a source include:

- What is the purpose of the information?
- Do the authors make the purpose clear?
- Is the information presented fact? Opinion? Propaganda?
- Is the point of view objective and impartial?
- Are there political, religious, or other biases?

Purpose can be the trickiest aspect of the CRAAP test because purpose and bias are often inseparable.

2.17 Example of Purpose

Let's take a look at a controversial topic to demonstrate what we mean.

This article, from a popular research database, is a perfect example of the issues

involving purpose.

The article is current, the author's credentials are listed and he is an authority on the topic discussed.

2.18 More Purpose

Before reading the article, the first clue about potential bias is the source. This was published in *Opposing Viewpoints* which includes many opinion papers.

Looking closer, we can see that the author's bias is obvious when he starts by saying he did not vote for the president and does not support his policies. Given that admission, readers of this article must critically weigh what he says.

The author has a clear point of view indicating a lack of objectivity. This article does not pass the purpose part of the CRAAP test.

2.19 Another Example of Purpose

Let's contrast that with this essay from the same database. We've already established that *Opposing Viewpoints* is filled with opinion papers, so we know there is some bias involved. However, the language and approach this article uses is much different.

The article opens by discussing facts about what the International Atomic Energy Agency has been accomplishing. This indicates that the authors' intended purpose is to inform, not engage in propaganda. The language used is not inflammatory and attempts to give the essay at least some objectivity as it advocates for its point of view.

This article gets a pass on the P of the CRAAP test.

2.20 Evaluating Sources Activity

(Drag and Drop, 10 points, 3 attempts permitted)

Test what you've learned about establishing authority, accuracy and purpose.

Drag and drop the concepts that help establish authority, accuracy, & purpose and put them in the CRAAP box.

Drag Item	Drop Target
Author affiliation	Picture 1
Gut feelings	
Publication date	
Peer-reviewed	Picture 1
Spelling errors	
Supported by evidence	Picture 1
Lack of strong bias	Picture 1
Author qualifications	Picture 1

3. Conclusion

3.1 Learning Outcomes

Now that you have completed this tutorial, you can:
Recognize the value of evaluating sources used in research papers, projects and posters

Use the CRAAP test to evaluate sources by looking at
Currency
Relevancy

Authority
Accuracy
Purpose

3.2 Conclusion

Congratulations, you have completed the *Evaluating Resources: Is Your Research CRAAP? tutorial!*.

Click on “Tutorials” to return to the Tutorials page or “Next” to complete a brief quiz.

4. Importance of Evaluating

4.1 Importance of Research

No source will ever be perfect but it is your task to find the most relevant, accurate, authoritative and when appropriate current sources that meet your research needs!

Careful review of sources is required so the purpose or bias of a source is not repeated in your paper.

Keep in mind also that scholars value ideas, opinions and conclusions backed by hard evidence, usually meaning research.

Aim for a variety of sources when conducting research, and always aim to include research-based sources.

4.2 Great Papers = Great Sources

Evaluate your sources before including them in your paper or project by putting them through the CRAAP test.

The more pieces of it they pass, the better the source.

Great papers come from great sources. Choose yours wisely, and success will follow!

5. Credits

5.1 Credits

Credits

Slide 2.5
Politics of the plate. Retrieved from http://politicsoftheplate.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/iStock_000012367319Small.jpg

Slide 2.9
Independent. Retrieved from http://static.independent.co.uk/s3fs-public/styles/story_medium/public/thumbnails/image/2014/10/11/12/Ferguson-riots-WEB-2.jpg

Slides 2.10, 2.11
Watson, P. J. (2015). Media launches new demonization campaign as oath keepers arrive in Ferguson. *InfoWars*. Retrieved from <http://www.infowars.com/media-launches-new-demonization-campaign-as-oath-keepers-arrive-in-ferguson/>

Slide 2.12
Twitter. Retrieved from <http://www.twitter.com>

Slide 2.14
Accuracy. (2016). *Thoughts for the day*. Retrieved from <http://www.thoughtsforday.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/accuracy.jpg>

The sources and images used in this tutorial are listed here.