Evaluating Sources: **The CRAP Method** \(^1\)

**Currency:**
*Is the information recent enough for your topic?*
- Has it been published in the last x years? (x will vary, depending on your topic)
- If you have a historical research topic, was it published around the date of the original event?
- What does the date the source was produced tell you about the information contained in it?

**Reliability/Relevance:**
*Where does the information come from, & does it apply to your topic?*
- Is it a primary or secondary source?
- Are methods or references provided?
- Who published the information?
- Was it peer-reviewed?
- Does all of the information apply to your topic, or only part of it?
- Is the information general or detailed?
- Is the information balanced or biased?
- How might you use this source in your own work: does it provide background, evidence, analysis, or a methodological framework?

**Authority:**
*Who authored this information?*
- Was it a single person or several people?
- Was it a corporation or organization?
- Are their credentials provided?
- What is their reputation or expertise? How can you verify this?
- Is it difficult for you to determine who is responsible for this information?

**Purpose/Point-of-View:**
*What was the author’s intent, & how is the author connected to the information?*
- Who is the intended audience? How does the intended audience influence how the information is presented?
- Is the information intended to inform, persuade, sell, entertain?
- Is this a first-hand account of an event, or research after the fact?
- Does the author have a vested interest in the topic? Is the creator trying to sell you something?

**Additional Questions for Online Sources:**
- What is the domain (i.e., .com, .org, .gov, .edu)?
- Who is the site publisher or sponsor, and is this information easy to find?
- Has it been updated recently?
- Are there any advertisements or other distractions?
- Is the source itself trying to sell you anything? Does that influence the message?
- Could the site be ironic, like a satire or a spoof?

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\(^1\) Modified from the CRAAP Test, originally developed by the Meriam Library at Cal State Chico, www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf
Evaluating Sources: The CARS Method\textsuperscript{2}

**Credibility**

**Goal:** an authoritative source, a source that supplies some good evidence that allows you to trust it.

Some things to look for:
- Source is known and trustworthy
- Author's credentials
- Evidence of quality control
- Known or respected authority
- Organizational support

Indicators of a lack of credibility:
- Anonymity
- Lack of quality control
- Bad grammar or misspelled words
- Negative meta-information (like reviews)
- Emotional earnestness, exaggeration or absolutes
- Claims of unique, secret information
- Claims of such dramatic implications that there should be widespread discussion, but there isn't; conspiracy theories

**Accuracy**

**Goal:** a source that is correct today (not yesterday), a source that gives the whole truth

Some things to look for:
- Timeliness
- Factual, detailed information
- Exactness
- Comprehensiveness
- Audience & purpose are clear and appropriate to your requirements

Indicators of a lack of accuracy:
- No date on the document
- Vague or sweeping generalizations
- Old date on information known to change rapidly
- Very one sided view that does not acknowledge or respond to opposing views

**Reasonableness**

**Goal:** a source that engages the subject thoughtfully and reasonably, concerned with the truth

Some things to look for:
- Balanced, reasoned argument
- Objective, moderate tone
- Consistency
- No conflict of interest
- Biases or world view made clear

Indicators of a lack of reasonableness:
- Intemperate tone or language
- Overclaims
- Sweeping statements of excessive significance
- Conflict of interest

**Support**

**Goal:** a source that provides convincing evidence for the claims made, a source you can triangulate (find at least two other sources that support it)

Some things to look for:
- Listed sources
- Contact information
- Available corroboration
- Claims are supported
- Documentation is supplied

Indicators of a lack of support:
- Numbers or statistics presented without an identified source for them
- Absence of source documentation
- Lack of corroboration