

The CRAP Test

The CRAP test is a **method for evaluating research** based on the following criteria: Currency, Reliability, Authority, and Purpose/Point of View. Below are some questions to help you think about **whether your research sources are proper for academic writing** and **whether the research will HELP you in your essay** by acting as **appropriate support, points of reference/conversation**. Essentially, in academic writing, **you are entering into a conversation** with other academics, researchers, etc, and you want to **be sure that you have verifiable, accurate, and pertinent research** supporting your argument so that **YOUR CLAIMS are viewed as valid and significant**.

Ask yourself the following questions when evaluating research source materials:

Currency:

- How recent is the information?
- How recently has the website/information been updated?
- Is the research current enough for your topic, or is it outdated?

Reliability:

- What kind of information is included in the resource? Is it based on facts and statistics, or is it “padded” with large vocabulary but really has no substance? (You must read your source material CLOSELY)
- Is the content of the source based primarily in opinion? Is the author’s argument balanced, showing both sides of an issue? Does the author address other ideas that are opposed to his/her own?
- Does the author provide references or research sources for data and/or quotations that they use? Does the author evaluate those sources, or does he/she use them at will without questioning the validity?

Authority:

- Who is the creator/author?
- What are his/her credentials? Does the author possess “authority” to speak and/or write about their topic? (For example, a doctor would not have the “authority” to talk about the field of education because he/she doesn’t have personal, relevant experience in the field of education, even though he/she would have plenty of experience in the medical field) Don’t assume just because an author has a Ph.D. or a distinguished title that they are a reliable resource for you and your purposes for writing.
- Who is the publisher and/or sponsor of the research?
- Is the author and/or publisher reputable?
- What is the publisher’s interest (if any) in this information? Does it make sense that this particular publisher would endorse such research?

- Are there advertisements on the website? If so, chances are it's not a reliable source because it's receiving its funding through private donors, which lends itself to biased information that is presented.

Purpose/Point of View:

- Is the research source fact or opinion?
- Is it biased?
- Is the creator/author trying to sell you something?

Some questions to ask yourself in regards to your research sources:

- How does this source **support my claim/argument**?
- **What interesting topics of discussion does the research source discuss** that I could potentially address in my writing? Remember, we want to ENGAGE in a conversation in our writing—both with our reader and with our material we are using.
- What source do I have that negates my claim/argument? **What source challenges my argument/claim?** If you don't have one, get one—you want to present a balanced view, and you can't do that without addressing the opposing viewpoints your audience may have. When you discuss them and then override them, THEN you establish authority as a writer and YOU are IN CONTROL of your material, not the other way around.
- **Is this source focused on a different area/aspect of my topic** than my other research sources? You don't want to have 5 sources all saying the same thing; find some variety in your research so you can view your topic from many different perspectives.
- Am I controlling my research, rather than my research controlling me? Meaning, **am I being intentional in my research?** Am I focusing on my main points of my argument and intentionally finding resources that will help support MY points?