

Evaluating non-academic sources

The Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose test

The Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose (CRAAP) test helps you to evaluate non-academic sources of evidence, such as a webpage. The webpage could be about a policy, program or practice you are considering using at your school, service or in your classroom.

You could use this test on your own, for example to help you assess whether information is trustworthy before you share it with colleagues. You could also use the test as part of a group, for example as part of a community of practice. This can help you and your team to make decisions about your practices and programs. If you're a leader, you can use this resource to support your team to engage with evidence as part of their ongoing professional development.

About the CRAAP test

Developed by a librarian at the University of California¹, the CRAAP test is a set of questions to think about when assessing how much you should rely on a particular non-academic source of evidence. The questions can help you decide if the information is likely to be objective and reliable, or whether there are signs it could be biased.

Some questions will be more important than others depending on your purpose, so there are no hard and fast rules. The CRAAP test is a tool to help you – it doesn't replace your professional judgement.

¹ Blakeslee, Sarah (2004) "The CRAAP Test," LOEX Quarterly: Vol. 31: No. 3, Article 4. Available at: <https://commons.emich.edu/loexquarterly/vol31/iss3/4>

Related frameworks

Early Years Learning Framework

Principle 5: Ongoing learning and reflective practice

National Quality Standard

Standard 7.2: Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Focus Area 6.2: Engage in professional learning and improve practice

Australian Professional Standards for Principals

Professional Practice 2: Developing self and others

Many of the questions relate to online sources of information, but you can also use the CRAAP test to assess printed texts such as books.

Once you're familiar with the questions, you'll find that you can weigh up the reliability of a source quite quickly in your head. In the meantime, you can use this resource to make notes and give each question a score to help you assess reliability.

Take the CRAAP test!

For each section, think about the questions and give a score out of 5, where 1 indicates an outdated, irrelevant or unreliable source and 5 indicates a very relevant and credible source.

As a general rule, if the information you need to answer a question isn't available, give it a low score.

There are no hard and fast rules to scoring or interpreting the scores and you'll need to use your professional judgement. As a guide, avoid relying on a source if:

- you've scored 3 or lower on 2 or more sections OR
- you scored 2 or lower on either Authority or Accuracy.

1 = Very poor	2 = Poor	3 = Okay	4 = Very good	5 = Excellent
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Is your source CRAAP?

Currency – is the information timely?

Score

When was the information written or posted? Is it up to date?

If there are links, are they functional?

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Relevancy – is the information relevant to your topic?

Score

Does the information help you answer your question or tell you what you need to know?

Is the information at the right level for you? (not too advanced and not too basic)

What country is it from?

Authority – are the authors or publishers credible?

Score

Who is the author? What are their credentials? Are they qualified to write about this topic? What else do they write about?

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.....

If an organisation, what is the nature of their activity? Can you tell who owns or operates the organisation?

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.....

What can you tell from the URL? – .com or .com.au, .edu, .org, .gov, .net

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.....

Is there contact information?

.....

If a website, is the layout professional?

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.....

Accuracy – is the information likely to be correct?

Score

Is evidence to support the information provided? How credible is the evidence?

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Are references provided? Are they current and academic sources?

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Can you verify the information somewhere else?

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Is the language objective and free from emotion?

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Are there any signs of political, personal or other biases?

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.....

Is it well-written with no spelling or grammatical errors?

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Purpose – is the information likely to be biased?

Score

Is the purpose of the information made clear? Is it to inform, entertain, persuade or sell?

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Who is the intended audience?

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Is it promoting a product or service?

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Is it likely the author or organisation has an agenda, for example, political, religious or personal?

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Example

Michelle is a primary school teacher who has recently seen an online talk about learning styles and is wondering, 'Should I use learning styles in my teaching?' She does a Google search for the term 'learning styles'.

The Google results page offers 2 sites that look worth investigating:

- Webpage 1: a blog on a site called [Sphero](#)²
- Webpage 2: a magazine article called '[Are Learning Styles Real?](#)'³

Michelle uses the CRAAP test for each webpage – you can read her notes and scores below – and concludes that the magazine article is the more reliable source of evidence, and that learning styles are not evidence-based.

This example provides you with some guidance for scoring using the CRAAP criteria. There's no single 'correct' score so you might find you score a little differently if you look at the webpages yourself – that's fine. If you find you're scoring very differently to the samples and your conclusion about the information is different to Michelle's, it's probably a good idea to talk to colleagues about how you're interpreting the criteria.

² Full URL: <https://sphero.com/blogs/news/learning-styles-for-kids#:~:text=The%20four%20core%20learning%20styles%20in%20the%20VARK%20model%20include,reading%20and%20writing%2C%20and%20kinesthetic>

³ Full URL: <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/04/the-myth-of-learning-styles/557687/>

Webpage 1: Sphero blog

The banner at the top of the webpage telling the Australian reader they can ‘now shop locally’ is an immediate red flag, and completing the CRAAP test confirms that this is not a reliable site to find evidence about learning styles.

Currency – is the information timely?

Score 5

When was the information written or posted? Is it up to date?

Published Dec 2020.

If there are links, are they functional?

Links work.

Relevancy – is the information relevant to your topic?

Score 3

Does the information help you answer your question or tell you what you need to know?

Partly relevant but there's a lot of information about using resources that need to be bought from the business.

Is the information at the right level for you? (not too advanced and not too basic)

Looks to be from the US but has a link to an Australian site.

What country is it from?

Authority – are the authors or publishers credible?

Score 2

Who is the author? What are their credentials? Are they qualified to write about this topic? What else do they write about?

Author is 'Sphero team' – no further information.

If an organisation, what is the nature of their activity? Can you tell who owns or operates the organisation?

Organisation is .com – a commercial business selling resources for teachers.

What can you tell from the URL? – .com or .com.au, .edu, .org, .gov, .net

Website is professional.

Is there contact information?

If a website, is the layout professional?

Accuracy – is the information likely to be correct?

Score **2**

<p>Is evidence to support the information provided? How credible is the evidence?</p>	<p><i>No evidence of any kind.</i></p>
<p>Are references provided? Are they current and academic sources?</p>	<p><i>No references.</i></p>
<p>Can you verify the information somewhere else?</p>	<p><i>Isn't emotional but seems one-sided – the text mentions that 'some critics doubt the efficacy of the learning style theory' but then ignores this. Nothing is included about who doubts or why they doubt.</i></p>
<p>Is the language objective and free from emotion?</p>	<p><i>Yes – well written.</i></p>
<p>Are there any signs of political, personal or other biases?</p>	<p><i>Yes – well written.</i></p>
<p>Is it well-written with no spelling or grammatical errors?</p>	<p><i></i></p>

Purpose – is the information likely to be biased?

Score **1**

<p>Is the purpose of the information made clear? Is it to inform, entertain, persuade or sell?</p>	<p><i>Information is a blog. The main aim of the website is to sell the organisation's products, which include resources about learning styles.</i></p>
<p>Who is the intended audience?</p>	<p><i></i></p>
<p>Is it promoting a product or service?</p>	<p><i>This suggests a high chance of bias.</i></p>
<p>Is it likely the author or organisation has an agenda, for example, political, religious or personal?</p>	<p><i></i></p>

Webpage 2: Magazine article in ‘The Atlantic’

The content comes from an online magazine, which at first glance might not seem like a good source, but the content is relatively recent, relevant to the question and scores well on the CRAAP test. This content is useful.

Currency – is the information timely?

Score 4

When was the information written or posted? Is it up to date?

Published April 2018.

If there are links, are they functional?

Links are functional.

Relevancy – is the information relevant to your topic?

Score 4

Does the information help you answer your question or tell you what you need to know?

Written in a journalistic style but interesting and the information is about whether learning styles are effective so very relevant to my question about whether I should use learning styles.

Is the information at the right level for you? (not too advanced and not too basic)

American.

What country is it from?

Authority – are the authors or publishers credible?

Score 4

Who is the author? What are their credentials? Are they qualified to write about this topic? What else do they write about?

Author is a journalist; organisation appears to be a magazine that publishes articles on a variety of ‘serious’ general interest topics. Website is professional.

If an organisation, what is the nature of their activity? Can you tell who owns or operates the organisation?

Although author is a journalist (so no real authority), I’m scoring a 4 because most of the information is in fact quotes from research and the several academics who were interviewed for the article.

What can you tell from the URL? – .com or .com.au, .edu, .org, .gov, .net

Is there contact information?

If a website, is the layout professional?

Accuracy – is the information likely to be correct?

Score 4

- Is evidence to support the information provided? How credible is the evidence?
- Are references provided? Are they current and academic sources?
- Can you verify the information somewhere else?
- Is the language objective and free from emotion?
- Are there any signs of political, personal or other biases?
- Is it well-written with no spelling or grammatical errors?

The journalist quotes 3 academics who were interviewed for the article (including Willingham who I've heard of) and includes links to several published academic journal articles (which all show that learning styles are not evidence-based).

Well written, style is journalistic but sounds objective and different perspectives are presented to some extent.

Purpose – is the information likely to be biased?

Score 4

- Is the purpose of the information made clear? Is it to inform, entertain, persuade or sell?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is it promoting a product or service?
- Is it likely the author or organisation has an agenda, for example, political, religious or personal?

Purpose is to inform in an entertaining way.

Intended audience would be members of the general public interested in serious types of issues.

No obvious sign of an agenda or bias.

