

# The Writing Center

## DLA: Evaluating Websites



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

**YOU MUST DOWNLOAD AND SAVE THIS FILE TO YOUR COMPUTER.**

**Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.**

Student Name:

### Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

### Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

### Criteria for Evaluating Websites

No person or group checks the information that is published on the internet for accuracy or authority. You are responsible for evaluating the authority and accuracy of any information that you intend to use for research purposes.

The acronym **CRAAP**, developed by librarians at CSU Chico, can help you determine whether different kinds of sources, including websites, are suitable sources for your research paper:

- Currency
- Relevance
- Authority
- Accuracy
- Purpose

Included in each section are questions that you can use as a checklist when evaluating websites for use as sources. Some questions are specifically for use with websites, while many of the questions can be used to help in the evaluation of sources in general.

### Currency

Currency is the timeliness of the information. You may or may not need information that was recently published; this depends on your topic and assignment directions.

- When was the information published or last revised?
- When was the website last updated?
- Does the website have many dead links?
- Is information on the page outdated?

### Relevance

Relevance is the suitability of the information to your needs. You need to decide if the information is related to your topic or research question.

- Does the target audience for this information make it appropriate for your paper?
- What is the level of detail? Is it sufficient for your purposes?
- Does the article help you answer your research question?

## Authority

Authority is the source of the information. This is the most important part of determining whether a website is an appropriate source for your paper, and there are several aspects to consider. You will need to do additional research in order to determine the reliability of the website and source.

## Author

The author is the person or organization who created the information.

- Who wrote the information? Is it an individual or an organization?
- Is there a way to contact the author? A legitimate author should have contact information available through a workplace or publisher.
- What are the author's credentials? If credentials are not provided in the information, you should search in other sources.
- Is the author qualified to speak on this topic?
- Is the author affiliated with groups or organizations that might influence his or her viewpoint? Additional research may be necessary to find this information.

## URL Domain and Website Layout

The URL is the web address of the site. The top-level domain is the suffix of the web address and is usually two or three letters long. These are some common domains and their meanings.

Domain Type	Type of Organization
<b>com</b>	Commercial businesses and companies. Information on these websites is generally for the purpose of selling products or showing the company in a positive light. Consequently, this information may be biased or fail to present multiple viewpoints.
<b>edu</b>	Educational institutions, primarily colleges and universities. Information published by university research centers and departments is generally considered to be from a reliable source.
<b>gov</b>	US governmental agencies and entities. These websites contain legislative, judicial, and regulatory information, as well as statistics, reports, and studies. Government websites are credible sources of information.
<b>mil</b>	US military. These are websites for branches of the US Armed Forces, such as the US Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. These are government websites and are reliable sources of information.
<b>org</b>	Non-profit and special interest organizations. Some organizations present unbiased information, while others strongly promote a specific agenda. Information from these sites requires critical evaluation to determine whether it is credible or not.
<b>net</b>	Network. These are websites that don't really fit under the other domain categories. Information from these websites needs to be carefully evaluated to determine its credibility.

In addition to the URL domain, you should also look at the website layout and content for clues as to the reliability of the information. Websites that use "clickbait" to attract viewers or have excessive advertising may be more focused on making money than providing reliable information.

- What is the top-level domain of the website?
- Does the website have a lot of advertising?
- Is the site a balance of text and images, mostly text, or mostly images? Generally, a site that is mostly images may be less credible.
- Is there an "About" page that gives background information about the site's author or sponsor?
- Is the website a content farm? A content farm has large amounts of content created by freelance writers or taken from other websites. Examples of content farms are Huppages.com and Dotdash.com (formerly About.com). This content is generally low quality and published for the sole purpose of drawing traffic to the site.

## ***Accuracy***

Accuracy is the truthfulness, correctness, and reliability of the information. In order to confirm the accuracy of the website, you will need to verify the information by doing additional research using sources other than the original one.

If you are researching a controversial issue that generates heated debate, search for information from both sides of the issue in order to get a balanced perspective. You should also use a variety of search engines, including the [Mt. SAC Library A-Z Databases](http://mtsac.libguides.com/az.php) at <http://mtsac.libguides.com/az.php>, and not only rely on Google. Google results are influenced by your previous searches and web activity, and you may eventually start to get skewed results.

Some professors do not want their students to use Google at all, so you should check with your professor before beginning your research. Other professors may prefer that you use [Google Scholar](http://scholar.google.com), at [scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com), which searches the internet for scholarly articles and books. However, Google Scholar does not have access to the same databases the Mt. SAC Library does, and you may not find the most recent information. Google Scholar can be used in addition to, but not instead of, the Mt. SAC Library A-Z Databases.

- Does the article have citations or references to other sources?
- Can the information be verified by outside sources?
- Do other credible sources refer to this article?
- Is this information from a peer reviewed or edited publication?
- Does the website use emotionally charged words or otherwise show bias?
- Is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?
- Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors?

## **Fake News Stories and Satirical Websites**

Some websites are hoaxes, satires, or parodies, and their authors will go to great lengths to convince readers that the information on their websites is based on fact. Other websites are more malicious in intent and publish outright falsehoods with no pretense to creativity or artistic merit.

These websites can be used to verify the truthfulness of information you find online:

- [FactCheck.org](https://www.factcheck.org/) - <https://www.factcheck.org/>
- [PolitiFact](http://www.politifact.com/) – <http://www.politifact.com/>
- [Snopes](https://www.snopes.com/) – <https://www.snopes.com/>
- [Washington Post Fact Checker](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/) – <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/>

In addition to the previous questions about author and web layout, you can also ask yourself the following questions when determining whether information online is true, satirical, or false.

- What is the source of the story? Is it from a site that carries fake news stories?
- Is there any indication that the website is satire?
- Can the information be found in other sources?

## ***Purpose***

Purpose is the reason the information exists. A website's purpose can give your perspective on the information it contains and whether this purpose creates the possibility of unreliable, misleading, or slanted information.

- Why was the website created?
- Is the purpose of the website to inform, teach, or share research relevant to a specific field?
- Is the purpose of the website to persuade readers or argue for a particular point of view?
- Is the website marketing and selling any services or products?
- Is the information from a personal website or does it express personal opinions?
- Could the purpose of the website cause any of its information to be biased?

## A Note on Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a popular website for getting information quickly about a person or topic, and there is nothing wrong with browsing entries for background information. However, Wikipedia is not a suitable source for a research paper. Wikipedia entries can be edited by any person regardless of their credentials or knowledge of the topic. In addition, Wikipedia provides very uneven coverage. Some topics have very detailed entries while others have very little information at all.

Any information you find in Wikipedia should be verified in at least one other reliable source. When citing this information, use the source that verified the Wikipedia information and not Wikipedia itself. Gale Virtual Reference Library, available through Mt. SAC A-Z Databases, is a scholarly alternative to Wikipedia.

## Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

### ☐ 1. Evaluating Websites Review

Answer the following questions about evaluating websites.

1. Why is it important to evaluate websites?

2. What does CRAAP stand for?

### ☐ 2. Evaluate Internet Sources

Look at a research paper you are currently writing. Choose three websites that you are considering using for your paper. Evaluate each website according to the CRAAP test. Circle 1, 2, 3, or 4 for each category.

- 1 = poor
- 2 = fair
- 3 = good
- 4 = excellent

After evaluating the websites, determine whether each source is suitable to use for an academic research paper. If you do not have your own sources, use the following websites.

	Research Topic	Website Name	URL
Website #1	Illegal immigration to the United States	<a href="http://www.fairus.org/">FAIR: Federation for American Immigration Reform</a>	<a href="http://www.fairus.org/">http://www.fairus.org/</a>
Website #2	Current US politics	<a href="https://www.theonion.com/politics/">Politics -The Onion</a>	<a href="https://www.theonion.com/politics/">https://www.theonion.com/politics/</a>
Website #3	Drug abuse by college students and young adults	<a href="https://www.drugabuse.gov/">National Institute on Drug Abuse</a>	<a href="https://www.drugabuse.gov/">https://www.drugabuse.gov/</a>

**Website #1****Research Topic:****Website:****URL:**

	Currency	Relevance	Authority	Accuracy	Purpose
<b>Score</b>	1234	1234	1234	1234	1234
<b>Why</b>					

Is this website a credible source for an academic research paper? **Yes** **No**

Give reasons to explain your answer.

**Website #2****Research Topic:****Website:****URL:**

	Currency	Relevance	Authority	Accuracy	Purpose
<b>Score</b>	1234	1234	1234	1234	1234
<b>Why</b>					

Is this website a credible source for an academic research paper? **Yes** **No**

Give reasons to explain your answer.

### Website #3

**Research Topic:**

**Website:**

**URL:**

	Currency	Relevance	Authority	Accuracy	Purpose
Score	1234	1234	1234	1234	1234
Why					

Is this website a credible source for an academic research paper? **Yes** **No**

Give reasons to explain your answer.

**Additional resources for evaluating websites and their content:**

- [Evaluating Information – Applying the CRAAP Test](https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf), [https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval\\_websites.pdf](https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf)
- [Evaluating Web Resources: The CRAAP Test](http://libguides.library.ncat.edu/c.php?g=778558&p=5584082), <http://libguides.library.ncat.edu/c.php?g=778558&p=5584082>
- [Website Research: CRAAP Test](https://libguides.cmich.edu/web_research/craap), [https://libguides.cmich.edu/web\\_research/craap](https://libguides.cmich.edu/web_research/craap)
- [Is My Source Credible?](https://libguides.umgc.edu/credibility), <https://libguides.umgc.edu/credibility>
- [Evaluating Internet Information](https://www.usg.edu/galileo/skills/unit07/internet07_08.phtml), [https://www.usg.edu/galileo/skills/unit07/internet07\\_08.phtml](https://www.usg.edu/galileo/skills/unit07/internet07_08.phtml)

### □ 3. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

**Note:** Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at [writingcenter@mtsac.edu](mailto:writingcenter@mtsac.edu) or (909) 274-5325.

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