

EVALUATING WEB PAGES

We have a handy acronym to help you determine whether a website may be trustworthy or not -

How to tell if it is CRAP:

<u>C</u>URRENCY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the page display a date or copyright? When was the last update?• How current are the links? Are any broken? <p>Why is this important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Publication dates give a sense of whether the site is 'active' or whether it is an orphan site.○ Dates may indicate when the site was last updated, but also when the material was first written, revised, or published on the web.
<u>R</u>ELIABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the information reliable and error-free? (Facts, spelling, grammar, etc.)• Can you tell if someone fact-checked the site – is there an editor?• To what other pages does the site link? Is the information presented clearly and effectively? <p>Why is this important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Web resources rarely have fact-checkers unless the sponsoring organization does.○ No web standards exist to ensure accuracy.
<u>A</u>UTHORITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there an author? What are their credentials? Is there a way to contact them?• What organization is responsible for the content? Are they reputable?• Is there a link to more information about the author or organization?• If no author or organization is noted, are there any other ways to determine the page's origin? (i.e. a header or footer showing affiliation; info from the URL and domain name) <p>Why is this important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The web is an open medium. <i>Anyone</i> with <i>any</i> level of expertise can publish on the web.○ Authorship and the qualifications of an author can be difficult to determine.
<u>P</u>OINT OF <u>V</u>IEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a bias or slant to the information presented?• Is the page designed to sway opinion?• Is there any advertising on the page? How much? What kind? <p>Why is this important?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The goals of the author or organization may not be clearly stated. Advertisement is often masked as content on the web.○ The web can serve as a virtual soapbox – determining fact from opinion can be difficult.

A quick primer on domain names:

.com	"commercial"	A for-profit site selling you something (including information, i.e. nytimes.com)
.net	"network"	Usually similar to a .com
.org	"organization"	A non-profit (perhaps still selling something – opinion, ideas, etc.)
.edu	"education"	An educational institution, college, or university
.gov	"government"	Sponsored by the U.S. Government

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