

Evaluating Free Web Sources – The C.R.A.P. Test

When you search the free web for information, **you** need to evaluate the website/webpage to determine if the information is reliable. When evaluating sources found on the free web, answer as many of the questions below to determine if the source is one you should use or if it is...

C	Currency <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Is the information current enough for your topic?○ When was the page/article published, reviewed or updated?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The copyright date at the bottom of the page is not the same as the date of e-publication.
R	Reliability <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Can you find the same information in a book, magazine or on another website?○ Does the website have the information that you need?○ Is the information objective (informational) or is there bias and prejudice? (i.e., BEWARE of skin cancer information on a suntan lotion site)○ Is the information accurate and error free?○ Does the author provide a bibliography or any list of materials used in the creation of the page?○ Do you see a lot of Ads or Sponsored links?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Websites that appear at the top of the results screen and/or down the right side of the screen PAY the search engine to place their results near the top. Just because it's first does not mean it has the best information.
A	Authority <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Who is the author/creator?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Please note that an author can be one person, more than one person, or an organization, agency, company or an institution.○ Does the person(s) who created the site/page have the education/ experience to present this information?○ Do they provide contact information?○ Is the page a personal page? (Look for any of the following in the URL: %, ~, "users", "AOL", or "yahoo".)○ Who is the publisher/sponsor of the site?○ Is the publisher/sponsor reputable?
P	Purpose & Point of View <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What is the intent of the page/site (to persuade you, to sell you something, to inform, etc.)?○ Is it fact or opinion?○ What is the domain (.edu, .com, .org, .net, .gov)? How might this influence the purpose/point of view? See Understanding URLs.

Understanding URLs: Look at the web address (URL)

The following 3 letter combinations (domain names) indicate the type of site you are looking at:

- ✓ **.com** – **commercial site** most common domain, **but** often not the best choice for research
- ✓ **.net** – **network** similar to .com, thus not often the best choice for research
- ✓ **.gov** – **U.S. government sites** – **best source for health information**
- ✓ **.edu** – educational **institutions** good for research, **but** if the web address includes a ~ (tilde), you are looking at a **personal** web page attached to the university's site.
- ✓ **.org** – **organizations**

PERSONAL PAGES ARE NOT RELIABLE - Here's what to look for -

- ✓ ~ tilde personal page on a university site
 - ✓ the word **users**
 - ✓ personal names (**Jones**)
 - ✓ **Blogs** are also primarily personal pages
 - ✓ **K-12** indicates a public school system
- Two letter domain names** (.ca, .jp, .au) mean that the site is **from a foreign country.**

Citing a webpage on a website:

Once you've decided the website is reliable and useful, you'll need to find as much of the information below as possible. This information can be found on various places on a webpage, and you may not be able to find all of it. At a minimum, you must have the information below labeled **Required**.

- Name of the website (Look at the banner)- **Required**
- URL to the **webpage** (copy and paste it into NT)- **Required**
- Title of the webpage- **Required**
- Publisher of the website (Look at the © symbol at the bottom of the page)
- Author(s) / Reviewer of the webpage
- Date of e-publication (date the page was last updated / reviewed/ updated) – NOT the copyright date
- The date you access the webpage (usually printed out on your page)- **Required**

Example webpage:

The image shows a screenshot of a web browser displaying a webpage. Red arrows point from text boxes to specific elements on the page:

- URL to this webpage:** Points to the address bar showing `http://www.csmonitor.com/Science/2013/`.
- Name of the website:** Points to the logo "The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR".
- Name of the webpage:** Points to the main title "Are horses naturally vicious? A Connecticut court says they are".
- Date of e-publication:** Points to the text "September 23, 2013".
- Author of webpage:** Points to the text "Stephen Singer, Associated Press".
- Publisher of the site:** Points to the copyright notice "© The Christian Science Monitor. All Rights Reserved. Terms under which this service is provided to you. Privacy Policy."