

Evaluating Search Results

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will review the importance of evaluating search results for reliability and other key elements. You will also consider how strong technical and initiative skills are an important part of this process.

Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. The Need for Evaluation
2. The CRAAP Test

1. The Need for Evaluation

Astronomers use tools like satellites and telescopes to search the night sky for comets, black holes, and even extraterrestrial life. But, they must analyze the information they find before they can present it to the world. They must be sure it's accurate and credible.

The same is true when it comes to navigating YOUR digital world. Your personal and professional success depends on your ability to evaluate the information around you and share it with the world in a responsible way.

In an earlier lesson, you learned about making sure any online sources you review or use are reliable. You don't want to count on information that is false or out of date. This is true whether it is a personal matter, a project at work, or an assignment in school. Taking the time to evaluate online information is critical before you depend on it for anything.

IN CONTEXT

Travis was invited to a party. He needed to find directions to the house as he had never been there before. Fortunately, his car had built-in navigation. He plugged in the address and pulled out of his drive. Thirty minutes later, Travis was lost. The navigation system took him to an empty lot. Travis could not understand what happened, but then it dawned on him... he had not updated the maps in his car for over two years! With outdated maps, he was sent to the wrong location.

The example above, while not related to an online search, illustrates the importance of having current

information. While Travis had the right address, he was using a digital tool that was not up-to-date. When searching online, there are several other factors you need to consider as well. You also need to think about the purpose of your search to determine if a result is meaningful to you or not.



Technology: Skill Reflect

Can you think of a time you relied on technology that was not up to date? What happened? Strong technology skills can help you make sure you are always using the most current version of any digital tool.

2. The CRAAP Test

Fortunately, there is a tool that can help you evaluate online search results. The **CRAAP test** is a five-step process that helps you remember what you need to look for when determining if something is reliable or not. It can also help you weed out results that have no relevance given the purpose of your search.



Currency

How timely is this information?
When was this source published?



Relevance/Coverage

Is this information relevant to your research topic?
Does this source meet the requirements for your assignment?



Authority

Who wrote, produced, or edited this source?
What are the authors' and publisher's affiliation?
Has the author been cited after?
Does the author cite others in their field?



Accuracy

How reliable is this information?
Can you verify this information using another source?
Has this source been reviewed by others?



Purpose/Objectivity

What bias is evident in this information?
Is this purpose to: inform, persuade, entertain, or to sell a product?
Does the author provide evidence of other viewpoints?

You will find that the answers to these questions will make it clear which search results are worth saving and which ones should not be used. Consider the following:



TRY IT

You are writing a paper on the growth of online education. Review the table below. Which resources would you rely on? Which ones would you not use?

Currency	A website about the history of online education dated 2018	A website about the history of online education dated 2002
Relevance	A website with a list of where you can earn an online AA degree	A website with a timeline showing the number of online universities each decade
Authority	An article written by a mom who decided to enroll her child in an online high school after seeing all the choices she had	An article written by the CEO of the largest online tutoring company in the USA
Accuracy	A site sharing some data about online student	A site sharing a lot of data about online

	enrollment numbers; the data comes from a study done by Yale.	student enrollment numbers but no indication where the numbers came from
Purpose	An article with a chart that shares positives and negatives of the increase in online education	An opinion piece about online education written by a professor at Harvard

So what do you do if a search result does not pass the CRAAP test? What if it looks really good, supports your point and you really want to use it? You need to do more research. It could be you can still use that information, but you need to verify it by finding evidence for that same information somewhere else. If you can find that same information from a more reliable source... you are good to go. If you are not able to do that, you should not use that source.



Initiative: Skill Tip

Strong initiative skills will come in handy when it comes to evaluation search results. Using your resources and what you know to review sites, articles, and more without someone telling you to do so can save you from negative consequences later.

Take a look at this short video to better understand the importance of using credible resources.

Add video: Strayer Week 5 Video #2



TERM TO KNOW

CRAAP Test

Five-step process that helps you remember what you need to look for when determining if information is reliable or not.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you explored why there is a **need for evaluation** of your search results. You reviewed the important steps of the **CRAAP test** (currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose). You reflected on your own technology skill and how important it is when it comes to being able to evaluate a source. You were also reminded that taking initiative to use the CRAAP test can save you from the negative impacts of using an unreliable source.

Enjoy the next lesson!



TERMS TO KNOW

CRAAP Test

Five step process that helps you remember what you need to look for when determining if information is reliable or not.

