

Source Evaluation

As you search for sources on the Internet, or online databases, part of your research task is to find out if the information you find is trustworthy. The T.R.A.A.P method can help. Use this guide to work through your evaluation of sources. Based on your assessment of each criterion, decide whether, on balance, the source can be trusted for your project.

Source Evaluation Overview – T.R.A.A.P.	
Timeliness	<p><u>When</u> was the information posted or updated? Is it too old to use? Your answer depends on your topic-- do you need up-to-the-minute information or can you make effective use of information that was posted several years ago?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for a <u>date</u> at the beginning or end of the article. • If you can't find a posting date, look for evidence in the text (e.g. references to people or events that are current or outdated).
Relevance	<p>Is the information on target for your assignment? Does it <u>answer your research question</u>? Does it provide evidence supporting or opposing your thesis? Who is the intended audience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and think!
Authority	<p><u>Who wrote the information</u>, created the webpage, owns or sponsors the website? Do they have knowledge, experience or credentials? What proof do they offer for their expertise? Do they provide contact information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Look for the "about" link and investigate.</u> • Use Google to find more information about the author, sponsor, publisher, etc. • If you cannot identify who wrote the information and you also cannot identify the person or organization responsible for creating or maintaining the site, you should not use its information for college research.
Accuracy	<p>What is on the webpage? Examine both content and appearance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it sloppy or <u>professional looking</u>? Is it cluttered with pop-ups and ads? Are there a lot of typos or grammatical errors? Do the links work? • <u>Where did the information come from</u>? Does the website identify the names and credentials of anyone quoted and tell you all the sources it used? Does it give you links to those sources? • Does it give you <u>links</u> to other reliable websites? Do other trustworthy websites link to it? • Use Google to learn what other credible sites think about this website. • Does the site clearly distinguish between facts and opinions? Can you <u>verify</u> "facts" on an independent website?
Purpose	<p>Why does this website exist? Is its purpose to try to sell you something? Is its goal to publicize and promote a particular point of view? Is its purpose to educate and inform? What is the bias of the website or its creator? Is the website upfront about its purposes and possible biases, or does it try to hide them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the "about" links and investigate. • Scan the navigation tools: are there shopping links? Donation links? Do they want you to "join?" • Do you have to provide personal information to use this site? • Consider the domain extension (.com, .gov, .org, .edu, .mil., .info., etc.)

Name: _____

TOPIC: _____

Date: _____

Website URL				
Webpage title				
T IMELINESS				
R ELEVANCE				
A UTHORITY				
A CCURACY				
P URPOSE				
Use it or lose it? Why?				