Theme 05: Identifying the literature

Evaluating sources

One method you can use to assess whether you have found an appropriate academic source is to use the CRAAP test. This test helps you to evaluate your sources by using five criteria. By asking yourself a number of questions about the source, you should be able to decide whether it passes the test and is suitable for your literature review.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| C | Currency | *This criteria relates to the timeliness of the source** When was the information published/posted?
* Do you have the most up-to-date version/edition?
* Is it important to have current information, or will older sources work as well?
* Websites: Are links in the text working?
 |
| **R** | **Relevance** | ***This criteria relates to how important the information is to you**** Does the information relate to your research?
* Who is the intended audience?
* Is the information at an appropriate level i.e. not too simple/too advanced for your needs?
* Have you looked at a range of sources to be able to judge if this source is relevant?
 |
| **A** | **Authority** | ***This criteria relates to where the information came from**** Who is the author/publisher?
* What are the credentials of the author/organisation?
* Can you trust the source? What are their credentials?
* Websites: Is contact information provided?
* Websites: Is it easy for you to find out more about the author/ organisation?
* Websites: What is the domain name e.g. co.uk?
 |
| **A** | **Accuracy** | ***This criteria relates to the reliability of the source**** Where does the information come from?
* Is the information supported by evidence?
* Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
* Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
* Are there spelling or grammar mistakes?
 |
| **P** | **Purpose** | ***This criteria relates to the reason the information exists**** What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell etc.?
* Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda?
* Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
* Is there any bias (e.g. political, cultural, personal)?
 |

Adapted from: Meriam Library (2019) Is this source or information good? [Online] Available at: <https://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf> [Accessed 11 June 2019]

**Task 1**

Decide whether the following types of website can be used in academic writing. Select your answer from the drop-down menus.

Journal websites Choose an item.

Media e.g. newspapers and magazines Choose an item.

University intranets Choose an item.

Blogs Choose an item.

Academic databases Choose an item.

Wikipedia Choose an item.

Business/Commercial websites Choose an item.

Online communities Choose an item.

Government websites Choose an item.

YouTube Choose an item.

**Task 2**

Information from the website address (URL) can also help you to decide whether it is appropriate or not. Do you know what these domain extensions indicate and should these sites be used in your academic writing? Complete the table below with your ideas.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **URL contains…** | **This means…** | **Is it likely to be appropriate for use in academic writing? Why?** |
| .com.co.uk.com.cn.cn.biz |  |   |
| .ac.uk.edu |   |   |
| .gov.gov.uk.eu |   |   |
| .org.org.uk |   |   |
| .net.net.uk |   |   |
| .info |  |  |

Task 3:

Now evaluate your sources. Make notes in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source 1:**  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Notes** |
| Currency |  |
| Relevance |  |
| Authority |  |
| Accuracy |  |
| Purpose |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source 2:**  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Notes** |
| Currency |  |
| Relevance |  |
| Authority |  |
| Accuracy |  |
| Purpose |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Module Learning Outcomes Covered** | **Academic Literacies Covered** |
| ML3 | AL3 |
| Choose an item. | Choose an item. |
| Choose an item. | Choose an item. |