Learning Development

Critically Evaluating Sources.

It is important that we carefully consider the sources that we use within our work, to ensure that our points are supported with well-reasoned arguments and conclusions. Remember, just because a source is published (peer reviewed or otherwise), does not mean that their findings and conclusions fairly represent your subject area. Similarly, we need to check that sources we use in our arguments are relevant, reliable, valid and credible.

Checking our sources: You can ask yourself if it is **CRAAP?** Is it **current**? Is it **relevant**? What is the **authority** of the source? How **accurate** is the information? What is the **purpose** of the information? Use the list below to help you to question the source and evaluate it.

The acronym **CRAAP**, is outlined below:

Current:
- Is the information up to date or current? Has it been revised or updated?

Relevant:
- Is the information **relevant** to your topic? What is the importance of the research? Can it be directly related to your research or is it specific to an idea or concept?
- Is the information unique? Is it similar to other research? Is it ground breaking or evaluative of a process?
- Who is the intended audience for the research? Is the information at the appropriate level for the reader?
- What type of research is used? Is it primary data or secondary data? Can you question the choice of literature used in the secondary sources?
- What are the methods used to collect the data? Are the methods biased to the question or objective? Are there assumptions made from the results?

Authority:
- Question the **Author** and those involved in the research. Is it from a credible source?
- Who has been involved in the research?
- Is the author qualified to discuss the topic? Does it connect to a corporate author (define)? What affiliations does the author have?
- You should always question the source used to publish the research. Is the source user generated (through wikis or forums) or self-published (using blogs, personal websites or social media)?

Accuracy:
- How trustworthy is the research? Is it **reliable?** Is it **valid**? Does it agree with other studies?

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- Does the language used in the article seem biased to one topic? Is the piece free from emotional concepts?

- Does the Author evidence their claims and support it using other literature? Is the argument supported by concrete findings or based solely on opinion?

- Does the research use statistical significant tests to provide more confidence in the findings and are P values provided?

Purpose**:**

- What is the **purpose** of the information? (Is it to teach, inform, sell, entertain) Is it informative? (fact, opinion or propaganda?)

- How has the Author presented the information? Is it objective or partial? Is the writing biased? (sometimes opinions are important and these can only be captured in certain sources). Is the Author considering other points of view or perspectives?

- Are the intentions of the research clear and disclosed? Is the research being funded by a company in order to validate a product?

- Is the writing designed to incite a reaction? Is the place the research is published in an article which is linked to a certain field? What would other scholars think of the research findings? Sometimes the journal within which the research is published promotes a particular view. For example, a neurology research based journal will look to promote neurological based arguments.

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