COMPUTING AND DIGITAL LITERACY

Evaluating Online Information

Difficulty level: Intermediate

Computing and Digital Literacy

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Overview of the concept

This is how you check whether something you read online is trustworthy before you believe it or share it. A health claim or a news story might look convincing, but the source, the evidence, and the date all matter. Checking those three things takes a minute and saves you from passing on something false. It is the habit that keeps you from being fooled by a confident-looking post.



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Rule

Evaluating online information: check a page with CRAAP: Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose.

Currency is how recent it is. Relevance is whether it fits your topic. Authority is who wrote it. Accuracy is whether it gives evidence. Purpose is why it was written. If several answers are weak, especially authority, accuracy, and purpose, do not trust the page.

Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Do a CRAAP check on this page: a health page dated 2015, no author named, selling a miracle cure. Give one note for each letter and your verdict.

SOLUTION

This is a CRAAP check, so test the page letter by letter: Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose.

Currency: old, 2015. Relevance: about the topic. Authority: no author named. Accuracy: no evidence given. Purpose: to sell a cure.

Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose are all weak, so do not trust this page.

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EXAMPLE 2

Q A post claims "Drinking hot water cures flu." A health authority site says there is no such cure. What is your verdict?

SOLUTION

This is a check-the-claim question, so compare the claim with a trusted source.

The health authority site disagrees with the post, and it is the stronger source.

So the claim is false.

Practice questions

1 Do a CRAAP check on this page: a science page dated 2024, written by a university professor, with sources listed, written to explain. Give your verdict.

- **A** Trust it
- **B** Do not trust it

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2 What does Currency ask about a source?

- A When it was written
- B Who wrote it
- C Why it was written
- D Whether it gives evidence

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3 A page sells the product it praises. What problem does that raise?

- A Currency: the page is out of date
- B Bias: it may praise the product to make a sale
- C Authority: no author is named
- D Accuracy: the facts cannot be checked

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4 Two sources disagree. What should you do?

- A Trust the source you read first
- B Trust the source with more pictures
- C Check a third reliable source and weigh the evidence
- D Ignore both sources

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5 What does Authority ask about a source?

- A Who wrote or published it, and are they qualified
- B When was it written
- C Why was it written
- D How long is it

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What does Purpose ask about a source?

A Who wrote the information

B Why the information exists: to inform, persuade, or sell

C When the information was published

D Whether the information has pictures

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A post claims "This vitamin doubles your memory." A university site says there is no evidence for it. What is your verdict?

A True

B False

C Unproven

D Trust it

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8 A post claims "The library opens at 8 a.m." The library's own site says it opens at 9 a.m. What is your verdict?

- **A** True
- **B** False: the library opens at 9 a.m.
- **C** Unproven
- **D** True: the library opens at 8 a.m.

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9 Which single CRAAP letter is weakest here: a page dated 2024, by a named doctor, with sources listed, that sells the treatment it recommends?

- **A** Currency
- **B** Authority
- **C** Accuracy
- **D** Purpose

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A site's address ends in .edu and the page lists its sources. Which two CRAAP letters does that strengthen?

A Currency and Purpose

B Authority and Accuracy

C Accuracy and Purpose

D Currency and Authority

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ANSWER KEY

1. Trust it

2. When it was written

3. Bias: it may praise the product to make a sale

4. Check a third reliable source and weigh the evidence

5. Who wrote or published it, and are they qualified

6. Why the information exists: to inform, persuade, or sell

7. Unproven

8. False: the library opens at 9 a.m.

9. Purpose

10. Authority and Accuracy

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