



How to Research

Applying 'The CRAAP Test'
to Websites

Learning Goals/Objectives

Students will:

- **Be able to evaluate websites for current AND accurate information**
- **Be able to determine what makes an authoritative (or credible) website**
- **Be able to assess your own research for quality**

Sorting Through it All

- The internet can be a **powerful tool** for finding information, but it can also be a major source of **unreliable** information
- We must use our critical thinking skills in order to sift through the countless pages of untrustworthy data
- Not all resources are appropriate for a research paper

Video Tutorial

Watch this 'how to evaluate websites' tutorial:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYajnQ-peP4>

Look For in the video: What constitutes a valuable resource?
What is an authoritative site (or one that has ethos)? What sites are preferred for research purposes?

The 'CRAAP' Test

The CRAAP test can help you evaluate the validity of the information you find.

C: CURRENCY - When was the website published or revised?

R: RELEVANCE - The importance of the information for your needs

A: AUTHORITY - The source of the information

A: ACCURACY - The reliability, the credibility, and the truthfulness of the content

P: PURPOSE - The reason the source exists (fact, opinion, propaganda?)

Searching Tips

Phrase Searching – easiest way to enclose the phrase in quotation marks E.g. "Shakespeare's plays" (will automatically be searched as 2 word phrase, in that order) "fuel cell cars" (will automatically be searched as 3 word phrase)

TRY IT: Donald Trump tweets 720,000,000 results "Donald Trump tweets" 3,120,000

Searching Tips continued...

And – if you want to combine two or more terms or concepts, connect them with "AND." It narrows the search by leaving out results in which one term, but not the other, is used. E.g. attention deficit disorder AND children AND school yoga AND health

In general – the more words or phrases that you connect with **AND**, the fewer articles you get; the more words or phrases that you connect with **OR**, the more articles you get (OR MEANS MORE).

A Few Words on Plagiarism...

1. Submitting someone else's work, word for word, as your own work.
2. Copying and pasting from internet sources without citing them.
3. Paraphrasing (changing someone's work into your own words) without citing it.
4. Only changing a few words to your own, but keeping the rest the same as the original source.
5. Using copied material from a variety of different sources all mixed into your assignment.
6. Submitting significant portions of your own previous work without citing it.
7. Some citations done correctly with other portions not cited.
8. Using citations to sources that do not exist.

Always Better To...

- **Use quotes**

Make sure to quote a source exactly, put the quote in quotation marks, and cite it properly according to the citation format you are using. Use owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/ as a resource for MLA or APA formatting & citation rules.

- **Use your own words**

Read the source you are using and then write a summary of the information in your own words. Remember to cite the source as you will have used the author's ideas. This where the **Annotated Bibliography** becomes important.

- **Reference your own past work**

If you are reusing work from a previous assignment you have done, make sure you cite this assignment.

Primary sources

The term primary source is used broadly to embody all sources that are original. Primary sources provide first-hand information that is closest to the object of study. Primary sources vary by discipline.

- In the natural and social sciences, original reports of research found in academic journals detailing the methodology used in the research, in-depth descriptions, and discussions of the findings are considered primary sources of information.
- Other common examples of primary sources include speeches, letters, diaries, autobiographies, interviews, official reports, court records, artifacts, photographs, and drawings.

Secondary sources

A *secondary source* is a source that provides non-original or secondhand data or information.

- Secondary sources are written about primary sources.
- Research summaries reported in textbooks, magazines, and newspapers are considered secondary sources. They typically provide global descriptions of results with few details on the methodology. Other examples of secondary sources include biographies and critical studies of an author's work.

Theory approach

Start off by thinking back to all the **theories and theorists** that you have come across in your courses so far. Some of the more widely applicable theories are Marxist, Freudian, and feminist theories which you can use **as a lens to examine** a primary text, a historical event, or a social issue. An example of using this approach might be taking Judith Butler and gender performativity (A theory I learned in a Gender Studies course) to do a feminist reading of a text in an English Literature essay. In this approach, once you have chosen a theory, you would introduce **it at the beginning** of your paper (in the introduction or a separate paragraph after the introduction) by **explaining and contextualizing** it (What is this theory about? How does it relate to your topic/ primary text?). This approach allows you to set up a **theoretical framework** for your analysis so that you are using your chosen theory to **support your argument** (McDougall). It might sound daunting at first when you hear about using a ‘theoretical framework,’ but all it really asks you to do is **use a theory to help you understand** or interpret, to **develop insights and analysis** about a primary text or issue you examine in your essay.

Scholarly approach

As an alternative to using a theory, you may want to use **scholarly articles** to **contextualize and support your argument(s)** in an essay. To do that, you would first need to select a couple of **peer-reviewed articles** written on your topic or primary text. If you have difficulties finding credible sources I recommend checking out another fun PWA blog for some helpful tips:

[http://sass.queensu.ca/writingcentre/tips-to-get-you-through-the-research-pr
ocess/](http://sass.queensu.ca/writingcentre/tips-to-get-you-through-the-research-process/). Also, “Avoiding Accidental Plagiarism” is a workshop at the Writing Centre

that offers useful tips on evaluating the credibility and relevance of sources; if you want to learn more, here is the link to the workshop slides:

<http://sass.queensu.ca/writingcentre/workshop-slides/>.

continued

Your searches themselves could begin with the title of the book or short story and that may be sufficient, or searching by the author's name or by terms that describe your research focus or thesis could work as well.

For example, a search for "Romeo and Juliet" or "William Shakespeare" or "gender AND 'Romeo and Juliet'" will all "work" to some extent as searches, but you will need to decide how focused you want your results list to be.

Also, look for options or limit your search to "full-text" articles or by a certain time-span or type of publication - "literary criticism" and "work overviews" might be useful options.

Examples of secondary sources

Secondary sources describe, discuss, interpret, comment upon, analyze, evaluate, summarize, and process primary sources.

Common examples of a secondary sources include:

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- Biographies
-
- Journal Articles
-
- Literary Criticism
-
- Monographs (books) written about the topic
-
- Reviews of books, movies, musical recordings,. works of art, etc.

So, the original short story or book that you are researching is a primary source in this case, and the secondary sources that you are searching for will interpret or criticize various aspects of the work, like character development, plot, themes, etc.

Where to look

The HCC libraries have a great selection of databases where you can find these secondary sources on English/literary topics. You can find the databases by clicking on the "Databases" link on the library homepage and then choosing "English" from the "Subject" drop-down menu at the top.

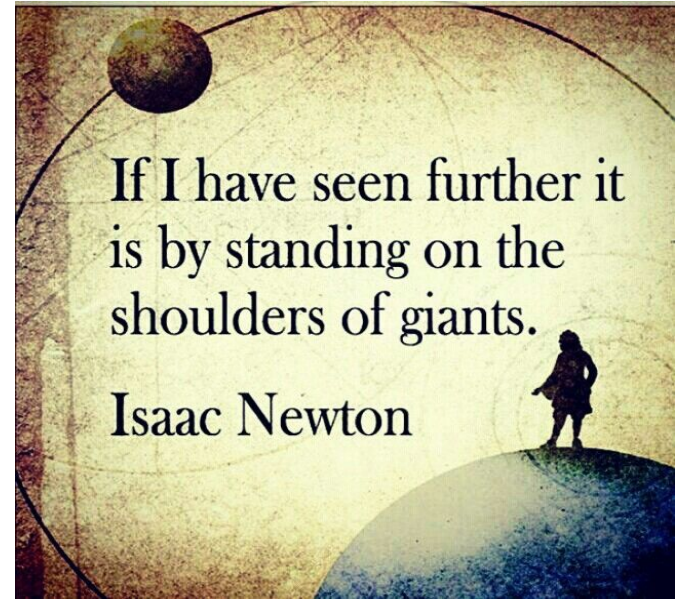
Depending upon the book or short story's author and publication date, you might try Contemporary Literary Criticism or Literary Reference Center, linked below. Some of our Multi-subject databases might also contain information, such as JSTOR or General Reference Center. Just choose "Multi-subject" from the "Subject" drop-down menu at the top.

Good Resources for Students

Gale: many resources in one place - large database covering all subjects and disciplines, new interface this year
Password for home use: Gale40CSB

Google Scholar: a customized search engine for students and academics

Google Docs: use 'Explore' tool, also add EasyBib (Google App) through Add-ons; makes citing a cinch!



Tips for Google Scholar

Since it works like a regular search engine, you should be as specific as possible.

It's designed to get the most relevant, recent, and often cited information.

Check Out: [Other Versions](#), [Get Quick Citations](#), [My Library](#)

More sources

https://learn360.infobase.com/p_Login.aspx?loggedOut=1

Username: ocsbstudent

Password: ocsb360

Library

-
- [Contemporary](#) [Literary Criticism](#)
-
- [Literary](#) [Reference Center](#)
-
- [Accessing](#) [Library Databases from Off-campus](#)

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