

Use the following TRAP test (timeliness, reliability, authority, purpose) to help you distinguish between credible and noncredible resources.

Timeliness

This refers to the currency of the information.

- Can you find a publication date?
- When was the article published? Is the information current (meaning it is still valid) or out-of-date?
- Why is this important?

Reliability

This refers to the usefulness of the information.

- Is the information accurate and complete?
- Is it primarily fact or opinion?
- Is the information reliable?
- Are there references for the quotes and data?
- Why is this important?

Authority

This refers to the source of the information.

- Who is the author?
- Is the author or organization qualified to speak on the subject? How do you know?
- Does the author provide contact information or credentials? Why is this important?
- Is the information sponsored? If so, is the sponsor or publisher reputable?

Purpose

This refers to the reason for the information.

- What is the purpose of the article?
- Is the author presenting facts or trying to influence opinion? Why is this important?
- Based on the writing style, who is the intended audience?
- For Web sites, what is the domain (.com = commercial, .gov = government, .org = organization, .edu = education), and how does this influence the point of view?