

Evaluate Sources - RAPT it!

R = Relevance A = Authority P = Purpose T = Timeliness

- **RELEVANCE** - Establish whether the source is useful to your research by asking yourself these questions:
 - Does this source add value in helping me understand or advancing my knowledge of my research problem?
 - Does this information provide important arguments related to my research problem?
 - Does this source offer solutions to my research problem?
 - If so, do the solutions seem well thought out and reasonable?
 - Is better information available elsewhere?
 - Is this information at an appropriate level (not too simple or too advanced) for my needs?
 - Does this source meet the requirements of my assignment?
- **AUTHORITY** - Investigate the author(s), editor(s), and/or publisher and try to identify their credentials and/or reputation:
 - Is their education, training, and experience in the field relevant to the information being provided?
 - Do they include a bibliography?
 - Is their information backed by scholarly research or scientific study?
 - Are they presenting primary (original/first-hand) information or secondary (borrowed/second-hand) information?
 - Do their facts, dates, data, and statistics appear to be accurate and error-free?
 - Are their facts, dates, data, and statistics verifiable by other sources?
 - Are they well-known in their field of study.
 - Have they written other materials?
 - Are they from an academic or other reputable organization?
 - Is the publisher or sponsor reputable?
 - What kinds of materials do they publish?
 - What are their editorial standards and/or processes?
- **PURPOSE** - Determine why the information was created and whether it is presented in a fair and balanced manner:
 - Is there minimal bias in the work (devoid of strong opinion, propaganda, and emotionally charged language)?
 - Is this work trying to sell, advocate, sway opinion, educate, inform?
 - Who was the material written or created for (intended audience)?
- **TIMELINESS** - Decide if the presented information is date-appropriate for your topic or research problem:
 - Determining timeliness is dependent on how you are planning to use the information and whether the topic is time-sensitive.
 - Keep in mind that technology, the sciences, and medicine are rapidly developing fields.
 - Older information, regardless of the subject area, can be useful for providing historical context, background info, and showing progression or change over time.

Tips for evaluating information from websites:

Determining **AUTHORITY** can be a bit more difficult when looking at information from web sources. Sometimes the individual author is unknown and thus the publisher is the author. Here are some standard website pages that may help when looking for author and/or publisher information:

- **About Us** page can give insight into the purpose of the website or organization
- **Contributors** or **Staff** page can give insight into the writers and their expertise
- **Contact Us** page can give insight into who owns the website or organization and where they are located
- **News Releases** page can give insight into how they are identifying or promoting themselves to the public
- **Links** to these pages are often in the fine print at the bottom of the **Home** page
- Be wary if facts, data, and stats are undocumented (not cited)
- Keep in mind that while top-level domains (.com, .net, .org, .edu, .gov, .mil, .int, etc.) may give a clue about the quality of a website, NEVER ASSUME website info is credible or accurate on that basis alone

Determining **TIMELINESS** for web information sources may also prove challenging. At the very least, look to see if the website or web page tells you when it was last updated. Many websites do not include any dates on their web pages. If you need time-sensitive information it's probably best to avoid using web info that does not include an exact published date.

what are other
words for
be rapt?



drink something in, absorb,
take in, digest,
pay attention to, soak up,
devour, assimilate

