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ACE Quick Guide to Evaluating Sources and Reading Critically

Introduction

Evaluating sources and reading critically is central to academic study. It enables the reader to **analyse information** and make a **logical decision** about the extent to which they believe something to be **true or false.**

Questioning sources and their **application to organisational practice** enables the reader to evaluate their validity, usefulness, and coherence. Not only does this demonstrate an engagement with relevant research and theory, but it can also **facilitate the creation of new ideas** and **inform future decision making**.

Evaluating Sources and Reading Critically

Throughout your degree apprenticeship, you will be expected to evaluate a wide range of sources, demonstrating a sophisticated approach to critical analysis. This can involve:

✓ Identifying a range of relevant concepts, theories, and models to help demonstrate you **understand** an issue.

✓ Exploring relevant **sub-issues and associated problems**, benefits, challenges, drawbacks, and limitations.

✓ Demonstrating an understanding of **alternative perspectives**, issues, concepts, theories, and models.

✓ Assessing **gaps in the research** and contributing new ideas and applications.

(Adapted from Glasgow Caledonian University, 2022)

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Identifying Appropriate Resources: The CRAAP Test

Developed by librarians at California State University-Chico, the **CRAAP Test** is a helpful 'checklist' for **assessing** the **reliability** and **credibility** of a resource. This checklist is usually presented as a list of questions:

Currency: The timeliness of the information
• When was the information published or posted? • Has the information been revised or updated? • Is the information current or out of date for your topic?
Relevance: The importance of the information for your needs
• Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question? • Have you looked at a variety of sources before choosing this one?
Authority: The source of the information
• Who is the author/ publisher/ source/ sponsor? • What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
Accuracy: The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content
• Is the information supported by evidence? • Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
Purpose: The reason the information exists
• What is the purpose of the information? • Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?

(Adapted from Benedictine University, 2019)

Benefits of Applying the CRAAP Test:

• Is an effective evaluation tool which can help to assess the credibility and relevance of a source.
• Questions outlined in the model promote critical thinking and interrogation rather than accepting sources at face value.
• Can save time during the research stage of assignments by enabling learners to identify and prioritise relevant material.
• Can be applied to a wide range of sources and academic literature.

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Reading Critically: The Critical Thinking Model

Having identified a credible resource for use in assignments, it is **important** to **ask meaningful questions.** Your questions should assess a source's **strengths** and **limitations**, rather than accepting the information at face value. This **three-stage model** will help you generate questions to **describe, analyse**, and **evaluate** scholarly resources:

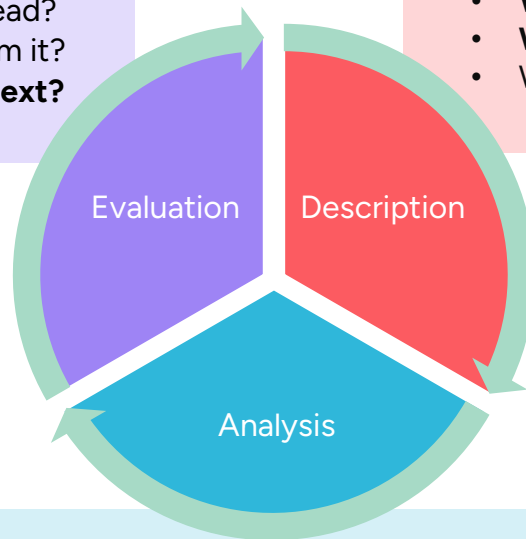### 3. Evaluative Questions: So What? What Next?

These will enable you to make **judgments**, draw **conclusions,** and make **recommendations**.

- **What** do **I think** about this?
- Is it **significant** or **convincing?** Why/Why not?
- **How** does this **compare** to other research I have read?
- **What** can be **learnt** from it?
- What should be **done next?**

1. Descriptive Questions: Who? What? Where? Why?

These will allow you to **establish the background and context**.

- **Who** wrote this?
- **What** is it about?
- **When** was it written?
- What is the **aim** of the text?

Evaluation   Description

Analysis

2. Analytical Questions: How? Why? What if?

These will help you to **examine methods, processes, causes, and alternatives.**

- **How** was the **research conducted**?
- **How** might one factor **impact** another?
- **Why** are these theories discussed?
- What are the **alternatives?**

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Reference List

Benedictine University (2019) *Evaluating Sources: The CRAAP Test*. Available at: https://researchguides.ben.edu/source-evaluation (Accessed: 29 November 2024).

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University of Leeds (2023) *A Model for Critical Thinking*. Available at: https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/1401/academic_skills/105/critical_thinking/2 (Accessed: 29 November 2024)

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