

Finding Credible Sources

When you are conducting research for your papers, it is important to know which sources are credible (that is, reliable) – or not. The source you use will depend on the type of assignment you are doing.

Credible Sources (Reliable)

These are the best sources for college-level papers. They often are peer-reviewed, which means they have been read and chosen for publication by other writers in the field.

- **Databases at Shaw's Library** - Visit Shaw University Libraries at <https://www.shawu.edu/libraries/> to find online resources, such as NCLive, JSTOR, ProQuest and other databases.
- **Google Scholar** – Go to scholar.google.com to search across a wide variety of disciplines and sources: articles, theses, books, abstracts and court opinions.
- **Professional Standards Organizations** - Organizations, such as the American Bar Association (www.americanbar.org) and the American Psychological Association (www.apa.org) are highly credible sources when it comes to professional standards.

Usually Credible Sites

Sites other than *.com* sites are usually credible, such as:

- **.edu** – usually educational institutions; generally, a good source of information
- **.gov** – government websites; usually a good source of statistical information
- **.org** – could be a non-profit organization often set up as a public service; can give you an insider view of an issue; beware of possible political agendas and biases.
- **News Websites or Newspapers** - This source is credible but could be biased and are not appropriate when the assignment requires scholarly articles.
- **Magazine Articles** - This source is probably credible but will likely be biased and are not suitable for papers requiring scholarly research.

Sometimes Credible Sites

- **Websites Ending with .com** - You should always be wary of company blogs or websites that have end with **.com**. Look for a specific author, which might indicate the website's credibility. You should compare these websites to other sources for factual information.
- **Dictionaries and Encyclopedias** - These sources are not necessarily unreliable, but generally you should attempt to find sources that are not just reference books. On the other hand, some of these sources might lead to more reliable and usable sources.

Not Credible (Unreliable) Sites – Avoid!

- **Wikipedia** - This source is not credible because it allows the public to edit the information, which makes it run the risk of being inaccurate.
- **Diary-type Websites or Personal Blogs** - These sites offer mostly personal opinions with no support for the claims made.
- **Websites That Sound Overtly Biased** - Unless you are specifically searching for opinion-based research, websites with titles such as “People Against Cars” or “Sugar is Always Dangerous” are probably going to be too biased for your research paper.
- **Essay Sharing Websites** – Do not reference websites that give you access to someone else’s essay. Even if you cite the source, it can be considered plagiarism.

So, Are *Your* Sources Credible?

To check the credibility of your sources, give them the **CRAAP test**, which takes into account:

C - Currency: Is the article current?

R - Relevance: Is the article relevant to my topic?

A - Authority: Is the author and authority or expert on the topic?

A - Accuracy: Is the information accurate and verifiable?

P - Purpose: Does the article meet my purpose for writing?

When in doubt, always ask your professor about a source.