

## TRAAP TEST FOR EVALUATING SOURCES

TRAAP is an acronym for Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose. Use this to evaluate your sources.

### **TIMELINESS:**

This refers to the currency 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- Is the information current or out of date for your topic?
- Are the links functional?

### **RELEVANCE:**

This refers to the importance of the information for your needs

- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Is the information at an appropriate level for your audience and context?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before deciding this is one you will use?
- Would you be comfortable using this source for a research paper?

### **AUTHORITY:**

This refers to the source of the information

- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- Are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations given?
- What are the author's qualifications to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or e-mail address?
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- Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source? Consider the website ending: .com, .edu, .gov, .org, .net, etc.

### **ACCURACY:**

This refers to the reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content

- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem biased and free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar, or other typographical errors?

### **PURPOSE:**

This refers to the reason the information exists

- What is the purpose of the information? to inform? teach? sell? entertain? persuade?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- Is the information fact? opinion? propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional, or personal biases?

# STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO USING THE TRAAP TEST

## 1. TIMELINESS - CHECK THE DATE:

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- **Look for when it was made:** Find the publication date, the last updated date, or the copyright date. This tells you how current the information is.
- **Think about your topic:** If you're researching something that changes fast (like technology or news), you'll need newer information. For things that don't change much (like history), older sources might be okay.
- **Ask yourself:**
  - Is this new enough for what I need?
  - Has it been updated?
  - Do the links work? (if you're online)

## 2. RELEVANCE - DOES IT FIT?

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- **Match it to your topic:** Make sure the information actually relates to what you're researching.
- **Check the difficulty:** Is it too simple, too hard, or just right for you?
- **Ask yourself:**
  - Does this help me answer my research question?
  - For whom is this written? Experts? Regular people?
  - Can I understand it?

## 3. AUTHORITY - WHO MADE IT?

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- **Find the source:** Who created this information? A person? An organization?
- **Look for qualifications:** Do they have the knowledge and skills to be trustworthy on this topic?
- **Ask yourself:**
  - Who wrote it, published it, or made it?
  - What makes them an expert?

- Can I find anything about their reputation?
- Is there a way to contact them?

## 4. ACCURACY - IS IT TRUE?

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- **Look for proof:** Does the information have evidence to back it up?
- **Check for sources:** Are there citations or a bibliography?
- **Watch out for bias:** Does it seem fair and objective, or does it lean towards one side?
- **Ask yourself:**
  - Where did this information come from?
  - Does it have evidence?
  - Has anyone checked it for accuracy?
  - Can I find the same information somewhere else?
  - Does the writing seem neutral?
  - Are there any mistakes?

## 5. PURPOSE - WHAT'S THE POINT?

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- **Think about the goal:** Why was this created? To teach? To persuade? To sell something?
- **Look for hidden reasons:** Is there an agenda behind the information?
- **Ask yourself:**
  - What's the purpose of this information?
  - Do they say why they made it?
  - Is it fact or opinion?
  - Does it seem objective?
  - Are there any hidden biases?

## REMEMBER:

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- **Some parts are more important:** Depending on what you're researching, some parts of TRAAP matter more than others.

- **Use your best judgment:** TRAAP is a helpful tool, but you still need to think critically.
- **Use other tools too:** Combine TRAAP with other ways of evaluating sources that you learn.

## APPLYING THE TRAP TEST

TRAAP Test Analysis of Romesh Ranganathan's article, "Zoos Are Prisons for Animals – No One Needs to See a Depressed Penguin in the Flesh," published by the *Guardian* in 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2017/mar/13/zoo-are-prisons-for-animals-no-one-needs-to-see-a-depressed-penguin-in-the-flesh>). This article argues against the existence of zoos. To determine whether it's a useful source for a paper, I'll apply the TRAAP test:

- **Timeliness:** The article is from 2017, which is a bit old for this topic. Zoos and public opinion about them can change. I'll need to find more recent sources to get a complete picture.
- **Relevance:** This article is definitely relevant to my paper because it directly addresses the ethical concerns of keeping animals in zoos. Ranganathan presents arguments that align with the "anti-zoo" perspective, which is essential for presenting a balanced view in my essay.
- **Authority:** Ranganathan is a comedian, not a zoologist or animal welfare expert. While he's a skilled writer and observer, his lack of scientific credentials might weaken his argument for some readers. However, *The Guardian* is a respected publication, which lends some credibility to the piece.
- **Accuracy:** The article relies heavily on personal opinion and anecdotes rather

than hard evidence. Ranganathan mentions a zoo losing its license but doesn't provide details to verify this claim. He also uses humor and emotional appeals, which could be seen as less objective.

- **Purpose:** The purpose is clearly to persuade readers that zoos are wrong. Ranganathan uses humor and strong language ("animals in prison") to make his point. This is important to keep in mind, as it highlights the subjective nature of the article.

## HOW I COULD THIS ARTICLE IN MY PAPER:

This article is a good example of the arguments against zoos. I can use it to:

- **Present a specific viewpoint:** I can quote Ranganathan's opinions to illustrate common concerns about zoos. However, this is so opinionated, that I have to be concerned about whether there is much to gain by using his words other than establishing the more extreme viewpoint on the issue.
- **Analyze persuasive techniques:** I can examine how he uses language and humor to influence the reader. He is a comedian, but the humor and language use seem to distract readers from the lack of factual evidence to back up his statements.
- **Counter opposing arguments:** I can find sources that support zoos and compare them to Ranganathan's claims.
- **Important Note:** I'll need to find additional sources that offer a different perspective and provide more scientific evidence to create a well-rounded and convincing argument in my paper.