



Finding Good Information

Finding good information is key to producing high quality research assignments and being able to justify your opinions/views on an issue. Doing effective research is about identifying good sources that present justified opinions based on reliable and trustworthy information.

Finding good information will also help you expand your knowledge base, avoid sharing harmful or untrue information, and achieve better results in research-based assignments.

This brochure provides advice and tools that will help you find reliable information, identify and avoid misinformation and disinformation, and review the quality of information produced by AI.



**Grow
Waitaha**

Opinions Vs Beliefs Vs Facts

It is important to understand the difference between opinions, beliefs, and facts when you are analysing information and its usefulness. This will help you to make sure that information is reliable, trustworthy, and evidence-based.



Opinions

An opinion is a judgement based on facts: it represents a genuine attempt to draw a reasonable conclusion based on factual evidence.

Opinions need to be justified to be useful. For a person's opinion to be considered justified, they need to be able to explain how factual evidence supports their opinion.



Beliefs

Beliefs are views held by individuals which are not based on evidence. They are typically based on personal experiences, identity, society, or community.

Beliefs cannot be disproved by evidence because beliefs are not necessarily rational and therefore cannot be argued.

A prejudice is similar to a belief, and is based on insufficient or unexamined evidence. Prejudices are testable and can be disproved/contested with factual evidence.



Facts

Facts are verifiable information that are supported by evidence.

Facts can be determined as true by researching the evidence, and can be used to support opinions.



But why?

Doing research and finding good information is key to being confident that your opinions are justified. Facing seemingly endless amounts of information about a topic can be intimidating and it is important to be able to filter what is true from what is likely to be false.

Whether online or off, every time you are faced with new information the following tips can help you identify whether something is an opinion, belief, or a fact. This will help you determine the usefulness of information and decide whether it is reliable and trustworthy.

Use the "CRAAP" test on the reverse side of this brochure to assess whether what you have found is useful or useless!

AI analysis

AI can help or hinder your research. If you are using AI tools as part of a project, it is important to be critical of the information produced. Apply the CRAAP test to assess whether the information is reliable and useful.

Even though the AI might be reliable, the information it is using to find an answer may not be. You will need to assess whether the information is logical, aligns with your knowledge of the subject, and has been sourced from real evidence.



AI programmes like ChatGPT use language models that analyse available information to approximate sentences and word order. ChatGPT generates answers using statistical analysis to guess what comes next based on probability.

Sometimes AI systems accidentally create misinformation by incorrectly matching the available information to your question to produce

AI can be helpful,
but remember,
misinformation can
be convincing.

something irrelevant, using outdated or disproved information. AI may fabricate citations that sound legitimate but in fact do not exist (Welborn, 2023).

Although AI can be useful, these issues can mean that using the information produced by AI may not be beneficial and in some cases could be harmful.

In the context of research projects, it is important to know that ChatGPT does not have access to all of the information you might think it does. Many academic journals and databases are paywalled, meaning that only the abstracts are included in the ChatGPT database, rather than the conclusions and key findings. This can result in incorrect or misleading results that contradict or do not align with commonly held views and/or your pre-existing knowledge of a subject. (Hiller, 2023).

The CRAAP test should be used to assess the reliability of the information produced by AI alongside considering whether the information makes sense and aligns with your understanding of a topic.

Useful tools

The following AI tools are designed to help you find good information online:



TLDR This

An online AI tool that summarises information found in written sources designed to help you digest information and can be used to help you get an overview of a topic before you start deep diving.



Google Scholar

An AI powered academic research platform which helps you search for good information and assess its usefulness and reliability.



Gist AI

Powered by ChatGPT, this website and web extension summarises articles, PDFs and YouTube videos to help you identify whether a source is worth your time.

Referencing 101

When doing a research project, referencing the sources you have used is important to show that your opinion or argument is justified with good information.

You should include a reference at the end of a sentence that includes information you have gathered from somewhere else whether it's a web page, article, book, or video. This is called a 'citation'. At the end of your document, you add a list of all the references used.

The information included in a reference:

1. The name of the resource.
2. The name of the author(s).
3. The date it was published.
4. The source:
 - the link (online sources) OR
 - the publisher (reports, books, print articles) OR
 - the place where the information was produced (reports, online sources).

Referencing styles ensure that all your sources are referenced in a uniform way. This helps the people reading your work to understand where you found the information and assess whether the sources are reliable.

There are 3 common referencing styles:

1. APA
2. MLA
3. Chicago

Scan the QR code to the right to see examples of how to cite your sources in APA format. Otherwise, the tools below will also help you to format your references appropriately.



Useful tools

There are useful tools within word processing platforms already, otherwise online tools can automatically produce citations for you.



Google Docs

The citations tool allows you to select a referencing style and then choose the source type, add how you accessed the source, and edit the information that automatically pops up before adding the citation to your project.



Word

The referencing tab allows you to select the style of referencing you want and then for each new piece of information used, select the type of reference you want to produce, fill in the blanks and add it to your text. It will also produce a reference list for you to add at the end of your project.



Online referencing tools

There are several websites and extensions that can be added to your browser which will automatically generate references that you can copy and paste into your project.

Finding Good Information

Useful or useless?

The CRAAP test is a popular way to analyse information and can be used to assess whether information is trustworthy and reliable.

C

CURRENCY

The timeliness of the information

- When was the information published or last updated?
- Is the information relevant, recent, and applicable to the subject area?
- Are the sources used by the author current or outdated?

R

RELEVANCY

The importance of the information to your topic

- Is the information related to your topic?
- Who is the intended audience? What level is the information?
- Does the information contribute to your knowledge of a subject?

A

AUTHORITY

The source of the information

- Who is the author/source of the information?
- Is the author qualified to write on the topic?
- Can you find information about them? Do they have a good reputation?

A

ACCURACY

The reliability, truthfulness, and correctness of the content

- Is the information supported by evidence?
- Does the information reflect what other credible sources have said?
- Does the information line up with your own knowledge of the topic?

P

PURPOSE

The reason the information exists

- What is the purpose of the information? This affects how it is presented.
- Is the information factual or based purely on opinion?
- What biases might the author have? Is the language unbiased?

Misinformation and disinformation

Being able to identify misinformation and disinformation is important to keep yourself and your community safe, as well as being confident that you are using fact-based evidence to support your opinions.

DISINFORMATION

False information created with the intention to harm. This harm could be to a person, group, or an organisation.

(The Disinformation Project, 2023).

MISINFORMATION

False, inaccurate or misleading information that is mistakenly or accidentally created or spread. It can cause harm if people believe it as true.

(The Disinformation Project, 2023).

Fake news is a type of misinformation generally created to encourage people to click on a link, buy something or support a point of view. (Your News Bulletin, 2020).

Fake news can include:



Clickbait



Satire



Incorrect facts



Unconscious bias



Commercial agendas



Manufactured photos

SO WHAT?

There was a time before the internet when you could not google the answer to any random thought. Now, everyone can be a creator and access an endless number of online platforms which enables information to spread globally and gives us access to more information than ever before.

However, there is a catch! Now that information can be shared quickly, without fact checking, what you see might not be true or reliable, and sharing or using it could further spread misinformation.

THE SPIDER ANALOGY

To test how far misinformation can spread online, a team of international experts tested how stories about spiders spin out of control. Of 5000 articles from 81 countries, almost half of the spider stories they analysed had errors and about 40 percent were sensationalistic. (University of Waikato, 2022).

Their findings showed how spider-related information in the media flows through a highly interconnected global network from local newspaper stories to articles trending on X. It's important to know how to identify misinformation online. Dr Painting, a NZ researcher involved in the project, found that:

The web provides a network to keep us all connected, but as we've seen in times of Covid it can also be used as a platform to share more serious disinformation and lead to threats of violence.

HOW TO IDENTIFY MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Sometimes it can be hard to identify misinformation.



Almost one third of New Zealanders have accidentally shared a fake news story or inaccurate information. (Netsafe, 2020).

1 IN 5

1 in 5 of us have shared a story after only reading the headline. (Netsafe, 2020).

The tips below can help you figure out whether what you are looking at is reliable, true information or well-disguised misinformation:

1. Check the facts.
2. Compare it with other information about the topic. Does it make sense?
3. Know your biases.
4. Be sceptical of the headline. Is it too good to be true?
5. Check the URL. Is it from an official source?
6. What else has the author written?
7. Look out for unrelated or stock images, spelling errors, and unusual formatting.



Test yourself

The following resources can help you to identify misinformation and disinformation:

Your News Bulletin

Can you beat fake news at its own game? The Your News Bulletin online trainer is designed to help you recognise fake news.

yournewsbulletin.co.nz/about/

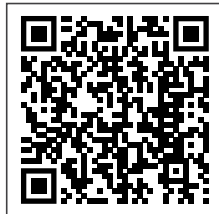
Bad News Game

The Bad News Game tests your ability to spot common online manipulation techniques like trolling and misinformation.

getbadnews.com/books/english/intro

Useful links

Scan the following QR code and check out a list of useful links and resources that show how to cite your sources using the APA format.



Can you beat fake news at its own game? Test yourself and find out.

Contact us



growwaitaha.co.nz



growwaitaha@gmail.com



facebook.com/growwaitaha



Find us on Instagram & LinkedIn

**Grow
Waitaha**

