

Study Evaluation Checklist: Popular vs. Scientific Claims

Instructions:

After you leave this course, you will continue to encounter news articles that make certain claims about nutrition. Use this tool as a guide to help you evaluate which claims hold water and which have been distorted or exaggerated. If you have to answer “no” to any of these questions, the claim may be CRAAP!

C	<p>Is the study Current?</p> <p><i>Look for the date of publication or latest update. This information should be available along with the journal title and volume number.</i></p>
R	<p>Is the study Relevant?</p> <p><i>Make sure the study fully addresses the claim you are trying to verify. Look for defined sections that include an abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion.</i></p>
A	<p>Is the study Accurate?</p> <p><i>Look for evidence that the claim is both peer-reviewed and replicable. Studies published in scholarly journals must go through a peer-review process before publication that ensures a study’s claims are plausible, according to other scholars in the field. Studies published as conference papers, press releases, blog posts, or newspaper articles have likely not been vetted by experts. The more peer-reviewed scholarly literature that supports the claim, the more likely it is that the claim is viable.</i></p>
A	<p>Do the authors have Authority?</p> <p><i>Authors’ academic credentials or institutional affiliations can be a clue to their expertise. This information is always listed in a scholarly article.</i></p>
P	<p>Can you identify the study’s Purpose?</p> <p><i>If the author(s) or publisher could clearly benefit from the claim being true (e.g. a researcher hired by a popular toothpaste company claiming that brushing your teeth with toothpaste twice a day can prevent cancer), then look closer at the study’s credibility. Another red flag is if the claim is written in simple terms accessible to a wide audience—scholarly claims will be written for experts and include jargon.</i></p>