

Modeling Lateral Reading with Climate Central

Total Time: 3 minutes, 16 seconds

So let's imagine that I come across this site, Climate Central, and I don't know who they are. It says Climate Central at the top and "The 2015 Wildfire Season Set an Ominous Record." I'm trying to do some research on wildfires, learn more about them, but I don't know who Climate Central is. So I'm gonna pause, and instead of reading down this page, I'm going to take a timeout and say, I want to find out who Climate Central is. Before I read any more I want to make sure that Climate Central is a credible source about climate and wildfires.

So what I'm going to do is something that we call *lateral reading*. I'm going to open a new tab and I'm going to type in the name of the source- Climate Central- into the search bar and do a search.

I'm going to be a little careful about where I click in the search results. So the first site that comes up is their own website. I don't want to go there, because I don't want to know what they say about themselves because they are probably going to paint themselves in a favorable light. So I'm going to keep scrolling and I see Wikipedia. Wikipedia is not a perfect source, but it can be a great starting point for lateral reading. I may not cite it in a research paper, but if I'm just trying to learn more, it's good for this informal, quick check about another source.

So I'm going to go ahead and click and just read what Wikipedia says about Climate Central. So, "Climate Central is a nonprofit news organization that analyzes and reports on climate science. It's composed of scientists and science journalists." That helps me think that they may have some expertise about this topic. "The organization conducts scientific research on climate change and energy issues. It sponsors classes for meteorologists. And it was founded in 2008 with seed money from the Flora Family Foundation and development funds from the 11th Hour Project. Its current CEO and chief scientist is Benjamin Strauss. I see that it won a Friend of the Planet Award from the National Center for Science Education."

Okay, so I could look deeper. I could dive deeper into some of who some of these individuals are, but right now, I am going to think about what I just read. I don't see any red flags, right? They have some expertise. It says it's composed of scientists and scientific journalists. They focus on this topic. I don't see any red flags – they don't have a reputation for spreading misinformation, or have conflicts of interests that are highlighted here. So I'm going to say that Climate Central is probably credible enough for me to read.