How to be news-literate and prevent the spread of misinformation

DeMario Phipps-Smith, senior manager of community learning

April 1, 2023
• I’m a journalist and marketing/communications professional.
• I worked in traditional newsrooms and digital startups.
• I follow trends in news literacy, especially in relation to marginalized communities.
You have the power to stop misinformation. Use it.

News literacy is the ability to determine the credibility of news and other information and to recognize the standards of fact-based journalism to know what to trust, share and act on.

The News Literacy Project is a nonpartisan education nonprofit building a national movement to create a more news-literate America.

Be INFORMED, Not MISLED
Protect yourself against election misinformation.

checkology®
"One of the most important educational tools for our time." — Fast Company

Newslit.org
Our mission

The News Literacy Project, a nonpartisan national education nonprofit, provides programs and resources for educators and the public to teach, learn and share the abilities needed to be smart, active consumers of news and information and equal and engaged participants in a democracy.

Our vision

News literacy is embedded in the American education experience, and people of all ages and backgrounds know how to identify credible news and other information, empowering them to have an equal opportunity to participate in the civic life of their communities and the country.
News literacy is essential to the health of our democracy.

1. Information is the basis for civic literacy, agency and action.
2. Our democracy requires healthy discourse.
3. We can empower ourselves to be less susceptible to misinformation and prioritize credible sources.
An approach to learning that seeks to teach learners HOW to think about their news and information and not WHAT to think about any particular source.
An emphasis on developing a healthy skepticism about news and information, without becoming cynical.
A dedication to the First Amendment and the conviction that a free press is a cornerstone of democracy.
A nonpartisan focus on specific, clear learning standards.
Information overload:

• The state of feeling **overwhelmed** by the volume of information, leading to more confusion than knowledge when it comes to a particular topic.

• **Impairs critical thinking.** With too many options, it becomes harder to distinguish between high-quality information and low-quality content.

• Can make us feel **anxious**, lead to “brain fog” and makes decision-making more difficult.
Information overload, when combined with echo chambers, algorithms and passive consumption of information, increases our susceptibility to misinformation.

“Information Overload Helps Fake News Spread, and Social Media Knows It” by Thomas Hills and Filippo Menczer, Scientific American, December 2020
What is misinformation?
Misinformation is information that is:

- False
- Misleading
- Inaccurate
- Incorrect

Regardless of intent to deceive.
Mis- vs. Disinformation

**Misinformation**
False or misleading information that is created and/or shared regardless of intent to deceive.

**Disinformation**
False or misleading information that is knowingly and intentionally created and/or shared in order to deceive.
There isn’t always a clear line between fact and fake. • The most convincing misinformation often plays on an element of truth.
• Professional fact-checking organizations have rating systems to address the nuance of misinformation.
What makes a news source credible?
News

Information that **informs** you, through **fair and impartial** reporting, about local, national and international events, issues and people of significance or of interest.
‘InfoZones’ — Primary purposes of information

- Informs
  - News
  - Opinion
- Influences
  - Advertising
  - Propaganda
  - Entertainment
Credibility for news sources can be evaluated using the standards of quality journalism.
Signs of quality journalism

• **Transparency**
  - Who reported the piece and when?
  - How was the interview conducted? In person? Over the phone? By email?
  - Where is the information coming from? If article is online, is the evidence hyperlinked?
  - Were any relationships between the news organization and subjects of the story disclosed?

• **Accountability**
  - Are corrections and updates issued when incorrect information is reported?
Accountability is a sign of a standards-based source.

The New York Times

Corrections: Sept. 27, 2022
Corrections that appeared in print on Tuesday, Sept. 27, 2022.

FRONT PAGE

Because of an editing error, an article on Sunday about the Sundance Film Festival reversing its initial praise for the documentary “Jihad Rehab” after the film drew criticism for its approach to the topic misstated the role of Abigail Disney in the making of the film. She was its executive producer, not executive director.

An article on Monday about transgender teenagers choosing breast removal surgery misstated the grade during which Jamie withdrew from high school. She dropped out during the beginning of her senior year, not during her junior year.

NATIONAL

An article on Saturday about an Arizona judge upholding an abortion ban from 1864 misstated Arizona’s status in the United States in 1901. It was not yet a state; it became one in 1912.
As inflation skyrockets, local Texas governments ponder tax rate increases as they balance budgets

Local governments in Texas have spent the summer preparing their budgets for next year, wrestling with inflation and a law that prohibits them from raising property tax revenues beyond 3.5% without voter approval.

JASPER — Every summer, Jasper County Judge Mark Allen begins to worry about two very different storms brewing: hurricanes and his county budget.

Allen and thousands of other local government officials across Texas entered this year’s budget season facing historic rates of inflation along with severe labor shortages. Complicating the budget process, counties and other taxing bodies say they can’t raise taxes to cover the growing costs of employee salaries and raw materials because their hands are tied by public pressure and recent legislation.

“It’s a situation where local governments are having to start siphoning off their emergency reserves, or just not be able to provide services to people,” said Allen, who has been the East Texas county’s top elected official for more than 15 years. “We’re losing quality personnel to the private sector, where they go out and try to find better-paying jobs and better benefits.”

The structure of news

- Headlines mainly contain nouns and verbs.
- Lead will summarize main points of article.
- Article is clearly attributed to one or more journalists.
- Quotes, facts and evidence are attributed to specific sources.
- Writing is in third person with active voice, neutral wording, past or present tense and logical structure.
A reporter’s fact check:

- Verification is one of the most important standards in journalism.
- All facts and details must be verified before publishing, including names, titles, dates and quotes.
- Information may also be reviewed by one or more editors.
How to gauge credibility of pieces trying to persuade us?
Opinion

Information that persuades you, ideally through fact-based evidence, to adopt a specific point of view (also called "commentary" in journalism).
The same topic can be covered by news and opinion

Informing
The Supreme Court decision to strike down Roe v. Wade is expected to trigger new battles between red and blue states, as women and advocates try to get around newly enacted bans by seeking the procedure out of state and using hard-to-trace medications.

Washingtonpost.com
Chasm opens between states over abortion pills and out-of-state care
The court’s overturning of Roe v. Wade is likely to lead to the greatest tensions between states with competing laws since the Civil War.

1:27 PM · Jun 25, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Persuading
Perspective: Overturning Roe could threaten rights conservatives hold dear
Parental rights stem from the same liberty that the Supreme Court just began rolling back.

Washingtonpost.com
Perspective | Overturning Roe could threaten rights conservatives hold dear

11:44 AM · Jun 24, 2022 · Twitter Web App
But opinion is not always labeled clearly.

Evaluation of language is essential to recognizing news vs. other types of information.
Standards-based news organizations generally publish opinion and commentary that is supported by evidence, logic and reason.
Opinion Journalism

• Quality opinion pieces are based on verified facts and employ sound, logical reasoning.

• Opinion journalism does not seek to avoid bias nor does it ignore opposing views.
Editorials reflect the opinion of the editorial board of a news organization.

They explain complex issues, seek to influence public opinion or endorse candidates who align with the values of the editorial board.

They have a clear thesis supported by evidence and reason.

They present opposing viewpoints and seek to refute them.
Opinion Journalism

- Should be clearly labeled to avoid confusion with news.
- Includes op-eds, columns, editorials and editorial cartoons.
Opinion Journalism

- Opinion/commentary pieces reflect the views of an individual.

- These pieces should also provide a clear thesis supported by evidence and reason.

- They may be in opposition to the views of the editorial board.
What makes the news? How can I determine what is newsworthy?
Newsworthiness

• A necessarily subjective determination made by newsroom leaders.

• Multiple factors decide which issues and events merit news coverage and how much coverage is appropriate.

• Newsworthiness also determines what stories are featured in each news cycle.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeliness</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Unusual</th>
<th>Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Something that is current or new. Breaking news is an example.</td>
<td>Something viewers/readers need to know, to help them understand key issues and events.</td>
<td>Something that is out of the ordinary or rare.</td>
<td>Something unique or interesting that viewers/readers might want to know more about.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some sources seek to manipulate rather than persuade or inform.
Opinion vs. propaganda

• Opinion persuades you, ideally through fact-based evidence, to adopt a specific point of view.

• Propaganda promotes a single view as being valid and “true” and ignores opposing views.

• Opinion can generally be evaluated rationally and acknowledges other viewpoints.

• Propaganda relies on emotional response and minimal critical reasoning.
Propaganda

Information that provokes you — often by using false or distorted information to manipulate your emotions.
## Common propaganda techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simplification</th>
<th>Exploitation</th>
<th>Exaggeration</th>
<th>Division</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making a complicated issue seem very simple.</td>
<td>Manipulating emotions rather than weighing facts.</td>
<td>Making its cause seem stronger or more popular than it is.</td>
<td>Attempting to broaden and exploit the gap between “us” and “them.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://newseumed.org/
**Latest News**

**One out of every 800 people over 60 who gets vaccinated for covid DIES, says scientist**

(Natural News) A Dutch vaccinologist who has co-developed various vaccines says that those for the Wuhan coronavirus (Covid-19) are exceptionally deadly. According to Dr. Theo Schippers, one out of every 800 people over the age of 60 who gets jabbed for the Fauci Flu will die because of it. This is an extraordinarily high death rate, and... [Read More...]

**Amid ‘green energy’ collapse, Germany now reconsidering decision to shut down zero-emission nuclear power plants**

(Natural News) Most everyone on the planet wants to breathe clean air and drink clean water, but the fad-fetish embrace of so-called “green energy” has been nothing short of lunacy. It’s true that fossil fuels produce carbons and pollutants, but with today’s technology — especially for American- and Western-made automobiles — the... [Read More...]

**Russia says Pentagon running “biowarfare facilities” in Ukraine**

(Natural News) At a recent press conference, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov once again lobbed the accusation that the Pentagon (aka the Pentagram) helped Ukraine develop “biological warfare facilities” in both Kyiv and Odessa. Echoing the words of top-ranking Russian diplomatic negotiators at the Russia-Ukraine peace talks in... [Read More...]

**From The Health Ranger**

**Inflation "Reduction" bill to unleash TAX TERRORISM upon the American people**

13K VIEWS

**ANALYSIS: Why China LOSES any escalation involving Taiwan and the United States Navy**

24K VIEWS

**THE SUMMONING: 72 nations PUBLICLY worship satanic idols in televised luciferian ritual while celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay creepily stalks frightened lambs**

81K VIEWS

**Americans shift food shopping to DOLLAR STORES as their last desperate strategy before mass famine... and REVOLT**

15K VIEWS

**Beware: ABV disease (Anything But Vaccines) is causing people to DROP DEAD everywhere**

20K VIEWS

**The vast majority of pharmacology, psychiatry, vaccine science and published research is a complete fraud**

34K VIEWS

**The Health Ranger Report**

**Situation Update, Aug 9, 2022 - Biden regime wages TERROR CRUSADE against Trump’s America**

**Brillouin Energy Hydrogen Hot Tube (HHT) Technology Achieves Performance Breakthroughs**

**In Taiwan the number of people dying after the Pibbyjabby is exceeding the number of deaths from the virus itself**

**Massive BACKLASH building as parents realize covid vaccines KILLED THEIR CHILDREN**

**Situation Update, Aug 8, 2022 - Inflation "Reduction" bill to unleash TAX TERRORISM upon the American people**
Questions so far?
What is news media bias?
News media bias

When assumptions or opinions favoring one side (or interpretation) of an issue or event skew news reporting in a way that is unfair or distorting.

News Literacy Key Term
The term ‘objectivity’ distorts our understanding

• Objectivity in journalism is an aspirational ideal but is often misconstrued and has established an impossible standard in the public consciousness.

• Thinking of the aspiration to be both **fair and accurate** is a more useful conceptual frame.

• This helps us work away from a binary approach to the subject (objective/biased) and toward a critical approach (less biased/more biased).
Your own biases and preferences can cause you to creatively read bias into news reports.
## Selective exposure theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selective exposure</th>
<th>Selective avoidance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The process in which people prioritize and seek out media that validates their beliefs.</td>
<td>The process in which someone avoids, blocks or shelters themselves from media that challenges their beliefs.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What news sources do you use?
What news sources won’t you use?
There’s a connection
All ratings are based on online content only — not TV, print, or radio content. Ratings do not reflect accuracy or credibility; they reflect perspective only.
Media bias charts can be helpful but have limitations.
Limitations of media bias charts

- Focus is almost exclusively on political bias and they reflect the orientation of opinion and commentary, not news.
- They use inquiry models that are debatable, not definitive ratings.
- Heavily influenced by perception.
- Can reinforce unconscious biases.
Limitations of media bias charts

- Tend to imply false equivalence between high-quality, standards-based news orgs and overtly partisan or problematic sources.
- Suggest that most newsrooms have a systematic ideological goal or orientation.
Essential questions for a careful and deliberate approach to news media bias.
Often, questions are leading or cynical

Where is the bias?

What does this media message want you to feel?

Who benefits from this?

What is the intent behind this news report?

Is there a hidden meaning behind this?
Guiding questions for news media bias

- What counts as “news media bias” and who decides?
- Is most bias in news overt/intentional or perceived/incidental?
- Can our perceptions of bias be reliable?
- If someone says bias is left or right wing, what is the “center” and who decides?
- Is all bias partisan?
Which do you think is less biased?

A Brooklyn pastor known for wearing designer outfits and extravagant jewelry was robbed along with his wife of more than $1 million while he was preaching at church Sunday, police said.

NYC bishop robbed of $1M+ in jewels during streamed church heist says he was targeted for 'celebrity status'
Does this change your view?

A Brooklyn pastor known for wearing designer outfits and extravagant jewelry was robbed along with his wife of more than $1 million while he was preaching at church Sunday, police said. cnn.it/3OAzsSn

NYC bishop robbed of $1M+ in jewels during streamed church heist says he was targeted for 'celebrity status'
Unconscious Bias

When our brains make quick assessments or judgments based on stereotypes or perceptions.
Which do you think is less biased?

The Internal Revenue Service is struggling to operate effectively according to some officials, hence the need for an additional $80 billion in funding.

GOP lawmakers and the right-wing echo chamber are spreading lies about what this new IRA funding will actually do, explains @MichaelMechanic. In particular, they’ve glommed onto the falsehood that the agency plans to hire 87,000 new “agents.”

New spending bill provides $80B to IRS for enforcement, audits on high-income individuals.

The Internal Revenue Service is struggling to operate effectively according to some officials, hence the need for an additional $80 billion in funding.

No, the IRS is not hiring 87,000 new agents to go after ordinary taxpayers. But wealthy tax cheats may have to watch their backs.
We must differentiate news from opinion

The News Literacy Project

WSYX ABC 6
@wsyx6

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Mother Jones
@MotherJones

GOP lawmakers and the right-wing echo chamber are spreading lies about what this new IRA funding will actually do, explains @MichaelMechanic. In particular, they’ve glommed onto the falsehood that the agency plans to hire 87,000 new “agents.”

motherjones.com
No, the IRS is not hiring 87,000 new agents to go after ordinary taxpayers. But wealthy tax cheats may have to watch their backs.

8:08 AM · Aug 12, 2022 · TweetDeck

9:10 AM · Aug 12, 2022 · Sprout Social
Most information we see is inherently biased

- Questions of bias must focus on news.
- Opinion, commentary and even propaganda are far more common.
- Before discussing bias, you must remember the question: “Was this created to inform or influence me?”
If credible news sources exist, why do people believe misinformation?
Factors for believing misinformation

- People are manipulated emotionally and cognitively into false belief.
- These beliefs often result from seeking information to calm fears, anxieties.
- Beliefs are reinforced through connection to a community of believers.
## Misinformation elicits emotional reasoning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional reasoning</th>
<th>Rational reasoning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive process in which we form or evaluate a conclusion based on our emotional reaction and whether something “feels” true.</td>
<td>The process in which we evaluate the evidence, facts, assumptions and other information to determine if the conclusion is supported logically.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Confirmation bias:
The natural tendency of people to readily accept any information, even false, that agrees with or reinforces their existing beliefs.
Motivated reasoning:
To deliberately interpret information in ways that confirm what you already want to believe and to invent reasons to dismiss anything that disproves these beliefs.
Misinformation relies on emotional manipulation to spread.
There have been several false claims trying to link Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene to the Jan. 6 pipe bomb incident; however, no evidence to substantiate the claims has ever been proven.
Why is it so difficult to talk to someone who believes misinformation?
When someone holds a false belief...

- They genuinely believe it to be true.
- In extreme cases, they see themselves “at war.”
- Institutional cynicism prevents them from trusting most sources.
- They have a strong emotional connection to their beliefs.
- The belief becomes part of their identity.
So how do we talk to people about misinformation in a way that is productive?
To prepare for this conversation, we need to look up a few things.

- What is “luciferase” and is it in vaccines?
- What is NTD News?
- What sources can we find that discuss this claim?
I’d never heard of NTD News, so I looked them up. They don’t seem to be credible and are very partisan.

I did, however, find another news source that conflicts with this. What do you think?

- Overall, we rate NTD TV Right biased based on editorial positions that favor the right and questionable based on the promotion of conspiracies, propaganda, lack of transparency, and false claims.

Questionable Reasoning: Conspiracy Theories, Propaganda, Lack of Transparency, Failed Fact Checks
Bias Rating: **RIGHT**
Factual Reporting: **MIXED**
Country: **USA (44/180 Press Freedom)**
Media Type: **TV Station**
Traffic/Popularity: **Medium Traffic**
MBFC Credibility Rating: **LOW CREDIBILITY**
Fact Check-Unfounded conspiracy claims about Department of Homeland Security and luciferase

Social media users are claiming that a patent for “fusion proteins containing luciferase” filed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is proof that the department is planning to use the COVID-19 vaccine as the “mark of the beast”.
I found a Reuters article fact-checking the luciferase claim. Reuters is recognized as a leader in international news and hard news reporting since 1851.

Reuters determined the conspiracy claims about luciferase were unfounded.

- Overall, we rate Reuters Least Biased based on objective reporting and Very High for factual reporting due to proper sourcing of information with minimal bias and a clean fact check record.

**Detailed Report**

- Bias Rating: LEAST BIASED
- Factual Reporting: VERY HIGH
- Country: United Kingdom
- Press Freedom Rank: MOSTLY FREE
- Media Type: News Agency
- Traffic/Popularity: High Traffic
- MBFC Credibility Rating: HIGH CREDIBILITY
I learned something interesting when I was reading about this. Did you know “lucifer” is Latin for “light bearer”? According to WebMD, luciferase refers to the chemical process that allows animals to glow.

No, COVID Vaccines Don’t Make You Glow

Written by Emily Willingham

COVID vaccines do not contain luciferase, and the chemical is not named after any of the versions of Lucifer that have dotted human stories since pre-Christian times. Rather, the name is taken from the Latin meaning of “lucifer,” which is “light bearer.” Luciferases are enzymes that act on high-energy molecules in animals like fireflies. The released energy from this breakdown gives these animals their glow, or bioluminescence.
Note: If you don’t trust your sources, you can track it back to the original document(s).
If the discussion is getting heated, or if it seems like the person is not open to new information, disengage.
Essential fact-checking and verification skills.
Essential skills

Critical observation

Lateral reading
Engaging in careful observation minimizes your emotional response so you can engage in rational reasoning.
Practicing lateral reading

• Instead of reading a single article up and down (vertically), open multiple tabs and read laterally across all of them.

• This helps you determine **an author’s credibility**, intent and biases by searching for articles on the same topic by other writers (to see how they are covering it) and for other articles by the author you’re checking on.

Term developed from research conducted by the Stanford History Education Group.
GMO mosquitoes now secretly VACCINATING people without their consent

(Natural News) New research published in the journal *Science Translational Medicine* reveals that Big Pharma is now using insects to deliver “vaccines” to humans without their knowledge or consent.

For their trial, researchers artificially furnished 200 mosquitoes with live, malaria-causing *plasmodium* parasites that had been genetically modified (GMO) to inject a malaria vaccine into the arms of human test subjects.
GMO mosquitoes now secretly VACCINATING people without their consent

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For their trial, researchers artificially furnished 200 mosquitoes with live, malaria-causing plasmodium parasites that had been genetically modified (GMO) to inject a malaria vaccine into human test subjects.

Google search results for Natural News, which shows Natural News as a right-wing, anti-vaccination conspiracy theory and fake news website known for promoting alternative medicine, pseudoscience, disinformation, and far-right extremism. The website began publishing articles in 2008 and is based in the United States. Wikipedia. Owner: Michael Allen Adams.

Facebook’s war against one of the internet’s worst conspiracy sites.
What does it mean to ‘Google like a pro’?

• Searching for information to verify or debunk what you are seeing or reading.
• Learning additional context from other sources.
• Seeing what others are saying about the accuracy of the information or the credibility of the source.
• Evaluating multiple sources to become more confident in whether to share or act on the information.
Eight Tips to Google Like a Pro

1. Use quotation marks
   If you put quotation marks around your search terms, Google will search for webpages containing that exact phrase.
   "I'm not a cat"

2. Limit to news
   If you are looking specifically for standards-based news articles that contain your search term, narrow your initial search results by clicking on the tab labeled "News."

3. Use basic Boolean operators
   Use AND (all uppercase) when you're searching to find results that contain more than one exact search term.
   "I'm not a cat" AND "Zoom filter"

4. Use parentheses to group operators
   You can use parentheses to order the search operations the way you would in a mathematical equation.
   For example, to search for only one of two search terms AND a third term, you would search: "Search Term1" OR "Search Term2" AND "Search Term3"

5. Narrow the time frame
   When you get results for a search, click on "Tools" and then "Any time." In the dropdown box, you'll be able to choose from results in the past hour, past 24 hours, past week, past month, past year, or enter a custom date range.

6. Search a specific website
   Limit your results to one specific website by adding "site:WEBSITENAME.com" to the search terms. For example, a search for the phrase "cat videos" on Facebook would be:
   site:facebook.com "cat videos"

7. Search one section of a specific website
   You can also search for a specific subdomain or subdirectory on a particular website. For example, to quickly search Facebook (a website) for groups (a subdirectory) that use the exact phrase "cat videos" your search bar should look like this:
   site:facebook.com/groups "cat videos"

8. Use - to exclude from results
   To exclude particular terms or websites from your search, just type - (the minus sign) before it. For example, if you wanted to search Facebook groups for the term "cat videos" but wanted to exclude results with the phrase "Zoom filter," you would search:
   site:facebook.com/groups "cat videos" - "Zoom filter"
Altered photos create false picture of Biden's trip to Ukraine and Poland

A series of fake photos floating around social media may have given viewers the wrong impression of U.S. President Joe Biden's February visit to Ukraine and Poland. Let's look at the facts.

QUICK LOOK

This is not a genuine photograph of Biden eating ice cream in Ukraine.

This is not a genuine photograph of Biden walking hand-in-hand with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

This is not a genuine photograph of an audience member making an obscene gesture aimed at Biden during his visit to Poland.

All of these images were digitally altered.

THE TAKEAWAY

The adage "a photograph is worth a thousand words" speaks to the efficiency in which images can convey stories. This makes manipulating them a powerful tool in the propagandist's playbook, as altered photographs can create false narratives about their political opponents. When fake and out-of-context photos confirm people's preconceived biases, they can quickly go viral as viewers either assume that they are genuine or reason that they might as well be true.

Sensational, outrageous or damaging photos of public figures should always be approached with skepticism — especially when they're coming from an unknown or openly partisan source online. Using a quick reverse image search to verify the authenticity and original context of images like these can help inoculate you against these manipulative tactics.
The digital age has made creating, sharing and accessing information easier than ever before, but it’s also made it easier to manipulate and fabricate everything from social media posts to photos, videos and screenshots. The ability to determine whether something you see online is genuine, or has been doctored or fabricated, is a fundamental fact-checking skill.

Is it authentic?

Learn about authenticity

Not all sources of information are created equal, but it can be easy to glaze over the significant differences while scrolling through feeds online. Standards-based news organizations have guidelines to ensure accuracy, fairness, transparency and accountability. While these sources aren’t perfect, they’re far more credible and reliable than sources that have no such standards. Viral rumors that confirm one’s perspectives and beliefs or that repeatedly appear in social media feeds can feel true, but if no credible source of information has confirmed a given claim it’s best to stay skeptical.

Has it been posted or confirmed by a credible source?

Learn how to check sources

https://rumorguard.org
Is there evidence that proves the claim?

Misinformation lacks sound evidence by its very nature — but it often tricks people into either overlooking that fact or into accepting faulty evidence. Many false claims are sheer assertions and lack any pretense of evidence, while others present digital fakes and out-of-context elements for support. Evaluating the strength of evidence for a claim is a key fact-checking skill.

Learn how to check evidence

Is the context accurate?

Tricks of context are one of the most common tactics used to spread misinformation online. Authentic content — such as quotes, photos, videos, data and even news reports — is generally easy to remove from its original context and place into a new, false context.

For example, an aerial photo of a sports championship parade from 2016 can easily be copied and reposted alongside a claim that it depicts a political protest that took place yesterday. In this false context, the photo may easily be perceived as genuine by unsuspecting people online. Luckily, there are easy-to-use tools that can verify the original context of most digital content.

Learn about context

Is it based on solid reasoning?

Misinformation is often designed to exploit our cognitive biases and vulnerability to logical fallacies. These blind spots in our rational thinking can make baseless conclusions feel plausible or even undeniable — particularly when they reinforce one’s beliefs, attitudes and values. Conspiracy theorists, pseudoscience wellness influencers and propagandists commonly rely on flawed reasoning to hold their assertions together. Learning to logic-check claims is an important element in verifying information.

Learn how to check reasoning

https://rumorguard.org
Join the RumorGuard and fight for facts
RumorGuard email alerts give you timely reminders to help push back against viral misinformation. Subscribe now to champion news literacy across your social media feeds!

1. Subscribe now

2. Learn
Learn and adopt news literacy techniques to determine the credibility of information you find online.

3. Dig deeper
Take foundational lessons on news media bias, misinformation, conspiratorial thinking and more in NLP's Checkology® virtual classroom.

4. Donate
Help the News Literacy Project keep our resources free. Your donation can make a difference today!

5. Give feedback
RumorGuard is in beta. Help us improve by telling us what you think.

https://www.rumorguard.org/take-action
Keep up with news literacy topics
Follow us on social media and share

/Q&A
https://newslit.org