News Literacy and Fact-Checking Tools  

With elections barreling down upon us, there is increasing pressure to fact-check claims by the candidates to understand which statements are based in fact and which are baseless claims. Unfortunately, politics in our America of 2020 is fraught with a lot of misinformation and even disinformation (intentional misstatement of fact and/or lies). A few weeks ago, U.S. Intelligence Officials announced that there is foreign influence at play from Russia and China, attempting to influence our elections each to the opposing parties’ advantage. Under these conditions it’s up to voters to step up and inform themselves-- and think critically about assertions they see and hear. Below are some tools to help us all use our smarts when evaluating claims and accusations, and to think critically rather than emotionally with our country’s future at stake. Our democratic republic, our American form of government “by and for the people” that we have promoted around the world for more than two centuries, demands an informed citizenry. Getting to the truth is our duty. Here’s how.

Checkology: From the [News Literacy Project](https://news-literacy.org), While designed for Middle and High School students, this non-partisan curriculum can help us all build our “News Literacy” skills! Try the APP quiz!
“Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts” – Former Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan

Here are a handful of fact-checking sites:

- Snopes.com
- Factcheck.org
- Politico.com
- W.P. Factchecker
- Associated Press Fact Check
- Opensecrets.org
  (Tracks money in politics)

Partisan Fact checking sites:  Mediamatters.org  (left)  Newsbusters.org  (right)

Another great tool to expand your thinking and compare media viewpoints is Allsides.com
This site presents topics from media outlets that are left, right, and center in their general viewpoints, so readers can see where points of difference lie, and can assess their own media menu-- and seek out central news sources that keep viewpoint in reporting to a minimum and stick to factual reporting.

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For more information or other reference and collection development assistance, call the Reference & Information Desk at Adriance Memorial Library at (845) 485-3445 x 3702 or (800) 804-0092 x 3702.
Media Bias Fact Check – is somewhat similar to Allsides.com, where the focus is on bias in reporting.

The Pew Research Center on Journalism & Media is another fine source for information on the institution of media and news reporting and on Americans’ views on media topics.
Since a picture is worth a thousand words, here are a few useful Infographics with concise, helpful tips for evaluating any information source—including “news” to help you think critically about news you consume.

Run your sources through the “CRAAP” test.

Adapted from the CSU Chico CRAAP Test for the UC San Diego Library

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HOW TO SPOT FALSE NEWS

READ BEYOND
Headlines can be sensational in an effort to get clicks. What’s the whole story?

CONSIDER THE SOURCE
Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.

CHECK THE AUTHOR
Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?

CHECK THE DATE
Reposting old news stories doesn’t mean they’re relevant to current events.

IS IT A JOKE?
If it’s too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.

SUPPORTING SOURCES?
Click on any hyperlinks accompanying the story. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.

CHECK YOUR BIASES
Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.

IS IT AUTHENTIC?
Use Tin Eye/Google Reverse Image Search before sharing photos to verify their original source.

CHECK MAINSTREAM MEDIA
or a fact-checking site.

STOP THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION.
THINK BEFORE YOU SHARE, REACT OR RESPOND.

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Evaluating a News Article

An Infographic Created by EasyBib, a Chegg service

Does the headline match the content?
Read the entire article before deciding to trust it or not as headlines are sometimes fabricated to grab your attention.

Are there spelling or grammatical errors?
Errors of this nature show that the author might have hastily posted the information or they may not be an authoritative expert in the content they're writing about.

Who is the Author?
No author listed is a red flag! It means you can't investigate them to see if they are credible or not.

When there is an author, do a Google search to locate other articles they've written, credentials, and if they can be contacted.

Are there any direct quotes that are incorrectly used or taken out of context?
Are you able to find the same quote on another website? Or did a Google search of the quote produce something different? Writers can modify quotes to change their meaning and to make you believe something that isn't 100% true.

Does the article only showcase one side of an argument?
If an article only features one viewpoint, the reader should remind themselves that they're not seeing the full picture. Be cautious of news articles that only report one side of the story.

Is the story completely outrageous?
If the story is unbelievable, chances are it is! Trust your gut instinct and check for many of items discussed in this article.

Are there references, links or citations?
These validate the author's information and allow us to easily access and explore more about the information in the article.

What is this website?
Find the mission and goals of the website by looking for its "About Us" section.

This information will help you to determine the website's purpose and credibility.

Find more guides and tools on writing and researching at www.easybib.com
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1. Big red flags for fake news: ALL CAPS, or obviously photoshopped pics.
2. A glut of pop-ups and banner ads? Good sign the story is pure clickbait.
3. Check the domain! Fake sites often add “.co” to trusted brands to steal their luster. (Think: “abcnews.com.co”)
4. If you land on an unknown site, check its “About” page. Then, Google it with the word “fake” and see what comes up.
5. If a story offers links, follow them. (Garbage leads to worse garbage.) No links, quotes, or references? Another telltale sign.
6. Verify an unlikely story by finding a reputable outlet reporting the same thing.
7. Check the date. Social media often resurrects outdated stories.
8. Read past headlines. Often they bear no resemblance to what lies beneath.
9. Photos may be misidentified and dated. Use a reverse image search engine like TinEye to see where an image really comes from.
10. Gut check. If a story makes you angry, it’s probably designed that way.
11. Finally, if you’re not sure it’s true, don’t share it! Don’t. Share. It.