

Navigating the News & Social Media for Accuracy & Validity

Part of the problem with trying to find accurate news on social media is that we are often trapped in a filter bubble of information - meaning that we only read, like, and share things that align with our own belief system. It is important to challenge those beliefs and be more critical of the media we consume and share. Information and media literacy is not just a problem of or a cure for the right or left. It is an essential skill for all of us no matter where we lie on the political spectrum.

Here are a few tips to help you critically evaluate information.

Tip #1: Be Critical of Images

Images are often used in the wrong context to tell a story.

- Example: [NoDAPL Buffalo](#)
- Example: [#bringbackourgirls](#)

Look for “photoshopped” errors, blurriness, pixelation etc.

- Images are easy to adjust
- Example: [Trump photoshopped hands](#)

Use Google Reverse Image Search to search for the image source.

- [Hurricane Sandy fake photos](#)

Search for images of same event from multiple outlets to confirm truthfulness.

- If you are seeing the same image or similar images on different sites, it likely happened.
- Don't forget about the context and how the image was used.

Screenshots are easily faked.

- Use web inspector/page source to change the HTML content.
- Fake tweet generators: [tweetfake.com](#)

Tip #2: Investigate the URL/Site

It is easy to clone a website and get a similar-enough URL to create a fake site.

- [Abcnews.com](#) vs [abcnews.com.co](#)
- [theguardian.com](#) vs [theguardian.com](#)

.gov sites aren't without bias.

but do provide a record of the happenings of the government - in theory.

- [Congress.gov](#) has all the legislation and publications from the government
- The [Federal Register](#) is the main source for the Federal government agencies.

Look for bias in the site

- Everything has a bias.
- This is particularly true for health & politics.
- [This media comparison chart made the rounds](#) on social media and it has relatively good information in it (but is biased!)

When in doubt, Google it.

- Google can give you context and additional information about a site, author or subject.

Tip #3: Read beyond the headline.

Look at multiple headings on the same issue from different sources.

- Watch out for clickbait.
- How do the headlines differ?
- How does the headline relate to the content in the article?

Look to see who the article is citing.

- Are the authors citing sources from their site, or other places?
- What kind of sources are they citing?
- Do they link to other sources?

Who is the news source or social media quoting or retweeting?

- Watch out for uncited sources.
- Look for context.
- Pay attention to if it is a retweet or a screenshot (See Tip #1)

Tip #4: Verify the Author

Most journalists want to claim their writing. If you can't find an author, be suspicious.

- Most news sites have writer profiles. It doesn't hurt to read them.
- If there isn't a profile - ask yourself why.

View the profile of the tweeter/sharer in question.

- Read what else they post about.
- Investigate who they follow/like.

Being verified on social media doesn't mean that author is unbiased.

- Originally meant to indicate real over satirical or fan-created.
- Many reporters on every end of the spectrum are "verified."
- Look at the content of the message rather than the blue checkmark.

Tip #5: Track down the original source

Author, quotes, and citations should give you an idea where to find the original source of the information.

- Most reputable news articles will cite their sources - some even link to other articles.
- Investigate chains of retweets and replies to follow the conversation

Search for quotations in Google to check for accuracy.

- Search results are not always accurate.
- Check a variety of sources.

Tip #6: Watch out for new technologies

New technologies will make it harder to identify the real from the fake.

- Bilton, Nick. [Fake News is about to get even scarier than you dreamed](#) Vanity Fair 1/26/17
- [Adobe VoCo Photoshop-for-voice causes concerns](#) BBC News 11/7/16

Additional Resources

A number of resources have done the leg work on the biggest news/rumors

- [Factcheck.org](#)
- [Snopes.com](#)
- [Politifact.com](#)

Use resources available at the U to access accurate/reliable information.

- [University Libraries](#) has access to millions of resources.
- Free [WaPost subscription](#) w/.edu email

List of Updates:

February 21, 2017:

- Added list of updates.

February 16, 2017

- updated link to “Trump Photoshopped hands”