

NEWS LITERACY

Use the checklist to evaluate news articles for truthfulness.

With the advent of social media, unreliable news is easier to spread, including shoddy, unresearched and error-filled reports intended to mislead. Viral news is not always real. These stories are often presented on websites designed to look like legitimate news organizations.

This form of “news” is easy to spot if you know what to look for. Consider these tips on how to evaluate an article to determine if the article is factual, trusted and accurate.

Consider the source

- ▶ Some satire news sites are upfront about their fantasy status. Others are not. Look for information on the mission, its staff or the physical location of the newsroom.

Read beyond the headline

- ▶ Headlines do not tell the whole story. They are intended to draw in readers. In an effort to be satirical, some websites will invent outrageous sources.

Check the author

- ▶ The byline of a news story can also give you critical information. Research the author. If no author is listed, the article is probably fake.

What's the support?

- ▶ Bogus stories will cite official, or official-sounding, sources. Check them. If the source cites government data, you can look that up. Check if other news organizations are reporting on the same topic.

Check the context

- ▶ Some false stories aren't completely fake, but a distortion of true events. These news stories take what actually happened and twist them. Sometimes they link something that happened long ago to current events.

Check your biases

- ▶ Confirmation bias, or putting more stock in information that confirms your existing ideas, is real and must be challenged. Next time you see a Facebook post from a sketchy source, check to see what other articles are posted on the site.

Consult the experts

- ▶ Websites like Snopes.com and FactCheck.org debunk news articles. See if one of them has investigated the article or “facts” of an article.