

Information: Fact vs. Fiction

Today's reporters are competing to get the news out first and in doing so; it is not always accurate. This leaves us as students (citizens) to always dig for the truth. This also applies to you when you are doing research.

What's the first thing you should do if you see a headline?

Google the exact headline. You should be able to see links debunking it if it's fake or verifying resources.

Snopes.com and **Reported.ly** also investigate the validity of Internet content. You could also check your article against another neutral sites such as: [NPR](#), [The Washington Post](#), [PolitiFact.com](#), and [FactCheck.org](#).

What else can you do to check the legitimacy of an article or data?

Check the source. There are many fake websites that have credible-sounding names. Go to the site's **About** tab.

- **What is the main purpose of the site?**
- **Check out the Author** - Click on the author's name, click on a social-media account and look for a blue check mark near their name on Facebook or Twitter. This means their occupation has been verified and they are who they say.

Know these Domains:

.edu = educational

.com = commercial

.mil = military

.gov = government

.org = nonprofit

- News that is happening at the moment - try to find a news outlet that is releasing original reporting not second hand. It is a "whisper down the lane" syndrome and false information can be dangerous. An example of this could be a reporter falsely identifying a suspect in a crime.

What about viral photos and videos?

Upload a suspicious or questionable photo into a search on Google Images. [Right-click on the photo, or take a screenshot to save it to your desktop, then drag it to the image-search box.] Then you can verify the subject of the photo and where it has

appeared online. Sometimes footage from the past gets recirculated in a current news cycle, like when a video reporting “**Muslims celebrating Paris terror attack**” in 2015 was found to actually be showing Pakistanis cheering after a 2009 cricket match. Also, keep an eye out for details that don’t match up or photoshopped. (Example: One part of the image is very bright; other areas are muddy.) **Broxson**



Aleppo 2016

This same picture appeared in over 50 articles in many languages.

The picture is an original, but used over and over again for months by many different writers.

The importance of Primary and Secondary Sources in reporting or research.

Primary sources may consist of:

- A journal or magazine article reporting on the results of an original experiment.
- A book or website might describe a theory or technique the author has developed or has expertise in.
- Not every article, book, website contains primary research or information. **Be careful.**
- To determine whether something is a primary source, ask, did the author(s) discover this finding themselves (primary source), or are they reporting what someone else found (secondary source)?

Primary = 1st hand

Secondary = 2nd hand (reporting from another source)

Check Sources -

Look at how sources are cited and what type of source is used.

- Scholarly content should always have source information
- Check the sources for reliability.
- If the content is from another source, go to the original source to authenticate information.

Evaluation

Once you have reviewed all of this information, you can decide whether you believe the source to be credible.

- Since the Internet is open to everyone, remember that you may be looking at false information or opinions instead of facts.
- No matter where you find information, it's a good idea to double-check it against other sources.
- If you're unsure, ask your instructor/teacher for advice.

Thoughts on Wikipedia

You must never fully rely on any one source for important information especially if you do not know the author.

- ❖ Remember on page 1 we mentioned verifying the author?
 - Very few Wikipedia editors and contributors use their real name or provide any information about who they are.

The focus of your search should be on finding accurate information and forming a full account of an issue, and not believing the first thing you read.

- ❖ Often times a contributor has an agenda.
 - Administrators on Wikipedia have the power to delete or block comments or even articles they disagree with and support only the viewpoints that follow their agenda or beliefs.

Most importantly according to the cite itself, Wikipedia says, “cannot guarantee the validity of the information found here.” It adds that “the structure of the project allows anyone with an Internet connection to alter its content. Please be advised that nothing found here has necessarily been reviewed by people with the expertise required to provide you with complete, accurate or reliable information.” (Wikipedia: Content disclaimer)

However, if you find an article you may be able to backdoor the information and find a primary source from the sources that are cited.

Sources

- [Evaluation of Sources - Lee.edu](#)
- [Evaluating Web Sources - Berkeley.edu](#)
- [Perdue Owl - https://owl.english.purdue.edu](https://owl.english.purdue.edu)
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:General_disclaimer