10 Tips for Fighting Fake News
How to Fact Check Like a Pro

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See also CUNY J-School Fact Checking, Verification & Fake News Guide
& CUNY J-School Fake News Cheat Sheet

How to Detect Fake News:

1. **Be skeptical**—verify before you share. Journalists assume they are wrong, and seek corroborating evidence.

2. **Create your own habit of fact checking**—it's a civic survival skill and duty in a "post-truth" world. Misinformation and disinformation are being used as weapons, to "undermine trust, create divisions, and foment chaos," in our country.

3. **Where to start**—ask yourself:
   - **Who says?**
     - Scrutinize the publication sharing the story and the sources they are quoting. Are they even giving a source?
     - Check the "About Us" page or whoxy.com for domain registry info.
   - **How do they know?**
     - Have you heard of them? What makes them an authoritative source for anything?
   - **Are they biased?**
     - Does the story only present one side of a debate?
     - Look for them on sourcewatch.org.
   - **Does this news turn up on any trusted site?**
     - Search to see whether or how the news is being reported on legitimate journalism sites (but be wary of mistaking quantity for quality—fake news tends to proliferate).
   - **What don't I know?**
     - What facts are being left out? Do other reliable sources challenge these facts?

4. **"Smell test" or "Gut check"**—does this seem unbelievable to you? Either way, verify it.

5. **Do they cite their sources of information?** Then you should go to the original source.

6. **Be aware of your own confirmation bias**— "subconscious tendency to seek and interpret information and other evidence in ways that affirm our existing beliefs, ideas, expectations"

7. **Is the article or information making you really angry and emotional?** Maybe because it was manufactured or doctored to exploit your biases.

You Might Also Like:

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Fact Checking:

8 **Write fast, but fact check slowly.** Create a habit to get your brain out of writing mode, and into fact-checking mode.

- Change the font, background color, or text size to trick your brain that it's looking at something new.
- **Get physical with your work**, print it out, then go through every sentence and **circle** every fact.
- **Read your work aloud** to make sure you catch anything you missed, like spell check errors.
- **Most common errors:**
  - Names, titles, place names
  - Statistics
  - References to time, distance, date, season, location, physical descriptions
  - Argument or narrative that depends on fact
  - Historical facts
  - Beware of superlatives like: "only," "first" and "most"

9 **Where to check:**
- **Primary Sources:**
  - Government reports (infodocket.com, everycrsreport.com)
  - Data (state, federal and municipal open data portals)
  - Court documents (search LexisNexis or courtreference.com)
  - Original scholarly research (found in Google Scholar™, or open source repositories like academicworks.cuny.edu or Base-Search.net)
- **Secondary sources** found in databases at work, and in your public, state and university libraries:
  - Search articles in databases like Nexis® or LexisNexis Newsdesk®
  - Search for data on Statista.com or Data.gov
- **Ask an expert:** a scholar, government agency employee, or industry representative.
- **Search** fact-checking sites to see if the information has already been debunked.

10 **Always give attribution, and be transparent about where you get your info.**

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