Thinking like a journalist: A case for news literacy

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The current landscape in one minute

190 million emails
19 million text messages
4.1 million Google queries
194,444 people tweeting
4.7 million YouTube videos viewed

Source: "2020: This Is What Happens In An Internet Minute," Lori Lewis (Lori Lewis Media) and Chadd Callahan (Beasley XP)
News vs. opinion

**News**

Information that **informs** you, through **fair and impartial** reporting, about local, national and international events, issues and people of significance or of interest.

**Opinion**

Information that presents a **specific point of view** and often tries to **persuade** you to adopt or support that view.

The News Literacy Project
Key ways to think like a journalist

• Differentiate “news” from “opinion.”
• Check it out: Don’t assume. Chase facts.
• Consider the source: Is it trustworthy and reliable?
• Recognize and internalize standards of quality journalism.
• Acknowledge corrections: While regrettable, they indicate accountability and credibility.
• Seek all relevant sides of a story for balance.
This is a scene from the 2011 movie *Contagion*.
Thinking like a journalist helps you to ...

- Recognize both credible information and misinformation.
- Become more knowledgeable about issues and events so you can make informed and empowered decisions.
- Understand how the news you read, watch and listen to is created.
- Participate in conversations about journalism.
- Hold news outlets accountable to their own standards.
How to know what to trust

FIRST

1. Be aware of your emotions.
2. Pause.
3. Decide if it is...

NEXT

USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Check the context: Has anyone posted the claim before, do they trust it?
Read the post carefully: Does it use quotes or actual evidence?

Investigate the source: Can you find the claim origin? Is it reliable?
Search the source: Does it use data or evidence?

Analyse the source: Does the evidence on the site support the claim?
Check the author: Does the author have a track record?

Evaluate the reporting: Are the sources accurate? Is the story well-researched?

4. Ask 50 questions...

ON AN ONGOING BASIS

USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Follow fact-checkers, add fact-checking organizations (see below) to your social media feeds to help you identify misinformation patterns.

Learn how to check if you're confident: Don't share stories unless you've checked them out yourself.
Help others: Question the legitimacy of sources from accounts that are new or unreliable.

AN UNFAMILIAR ORGANIZATION/SOURCE

Look for evidence of source transparency: Is the source up front about who wrote and owns it? Does it reveal its sources? Does it have a clear, easily accessible source for its articles? Provide feedback on this information.

Take note of unreliable sources: If an account repeatedly posts misleading or false information, avoid it.

A RECOGNIZED STANDARD-BASED SOURCE

Learn the standards: Quality journalism is guided by professional standards (e.g., the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics) that can help you recognize good reporting.

Develop a critical eye: Follow experts and frequently discuss journalism issues and critique news coverage.

Sanitize before you share
4 quick steps to stop the spread of misinformation

Remember:
- Taking these steps can eliminate a large percentage of viral rumors and falsehoods.
- Visit newslit.org/coronavirus to learn more about sorting fact from fiction.
1. Pause.
   Don’t let your emotions take over.

2. Glance through comments.
   Has someone replied to this with a fact check?
3. Do a quick search.

In the search bar, turn the claim you're checking into a question. Look for credible sources in the results.
4. Ask for the source.

Reply to the person who shared the post, asking for the original source or for other evidence supporting the claim. Raising this where others can see it lets them know that the claim is questionable.
Once you’ve followed these steps:

- If you find credible evidence that a post isn’t true, alert others in a reply. If the post is dangerous or harmful, report it.

- If you still aren’t sure that the post is true, don’t share it.

Visit newslit.org/coronavirus to learn more about sorting fact from fiction.

Want more? Try out our Checkology® virtual classroom at checkology.org.
Graphic created by the News Literacy Project newslit.org
Thank you!

News Literacy Project

Give facts a fighting chance

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