

# Thinking like a journalist: A case for news literacy

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# The current landscape in one minute

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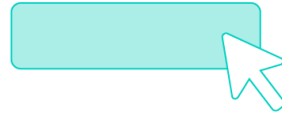
**190 million**  
emails



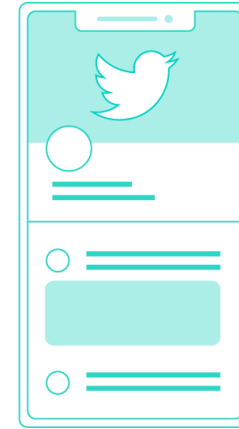
**19 million**  
text messages



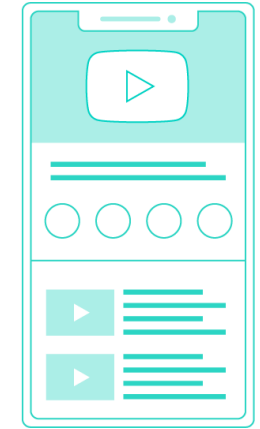
**SEARCH**



**4.1 million**  
Google queries



**194,444**  
people tweeting



**4.7 million**  
YouTube videos  
viewed

# News vs. opinion

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## 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.

# Key ways to think like a journalist

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- 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*.



**FALSE**

# Thinking like a journalist helps you to ...

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- 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

Check the comments. Has anyone provided evidence for the claim being made (that it is true)?

Read the post carefully. Does it cite reputable sources or actual evidence?

Check for red flags. Do bad actors often try to pass off unrelated photos and video as "evidence" for their false claims?

Search elsewhere for the claim. Does it appear in other user-generated forums? Have other accounts shared identical posts? Have quality news outlets or fact-checking organizations written about this?

Investigate the source. Can you tell where this claim originated? If not, how reliable are other posts shared by this account? Does the account seem responsibly run, or is it devoted to amplifying divisive, inflammatory content?

Copy the headline into a search bar, adding a question mark at the end. Have reputable news outlets or fact-checking organizations written about this?

Search for the name of the source. Are there credible results that identify it as unreliable? Can you determine if it is a satirical or entertainment site? Is there evidence that it is a state-run news outlet?

Analyze the source. Does the website include disclaimers that its content is not to be taken seriously? Do other items on the site look suspicious? Does the site contain original reporting, or simply commentary? Are there numerous grammatical and/or spelling errors?

Is there anything in this report that seems "off" to you? Does it use loaded language, or contain other signs that it's unfair?

Look for other coverage. Are other credible standards-based outlets reporting the same thing?

Evaluate the reporting. Are the people, documents and other sources cited in the report generally considered reliable? Have the details been clearly verified, or is the story still developing?

4. Take 60 seconds to...

5. One more minute to...

6. Build savvy habits.

7. Deeper expertise.

## ON AN ONGOING BASIS

### USER-GENERATED CONTENT

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

Learn best practices. Don't share memes or other posts if you're not sure that they are true; doing so only amplifies misinformation. Don't share links unless you have checked them out yourself.

Help others. Question the legitimacy of suspicious posts from accounts you don't know.

### AN UNFAMILIAR ORGANIZATION/SOURCE

Look for transparency. Is this source up front about who owns and runs it? Does it correct errors? Does it request and publish letters to the editor? Is it clear who is creating articles or posts?

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

### A RECOGNIZED STANDARDS-BASED NEWS SOURCE

Learn the standards. Quality journalism is guided by aspirational standards (for example, the Society of Professional Journalists' [Code of Ethics](#)) that can help you recognize good reporting.

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

Dive into the field of journalism. Seek out reputable journalism organizations, subscribe to industry newsletters, listen to journalism podcasts, and read books and articles about the ways that journalism is changing.

<http://bit.ly/NewsLitTrust>

### REMEMBER:

Guard your emotions. Misinformation often seeks to exploit our most deeply held values and beliefs to generate outrage and anger. Don't fall for this trick.

Watch for false evidence and fabrications. Purveyors of misinformation use a variety of tactics. The most common include presenting photos and videos out of context, making crude alterations to photos and documents, and fabricating quotes and social media posts for public figures.

### RESOURCES

Visit the News Literacy Project's [website](#), and follow NLP on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Subscribe to NLP's weekly email newsletter, [The Sift](#)®.

Download and play [Informable](#), NLP's innovative mobile app, which tests news literacy skills in a gamelike format.

Check out reputable fact-checking organizations, such as [PolitiFact](#), [FactCheck.org](#), [Snopes](#), [Truth or Fiction](#), [Lead Stories](#) and [AFP Fact Check](#).

Learn about organizations that train and support journalists, such as the [Poynter Institute](#), [First Draft](#), the [News Leaders Association](#) and the [Society of Professional Journalists](#).



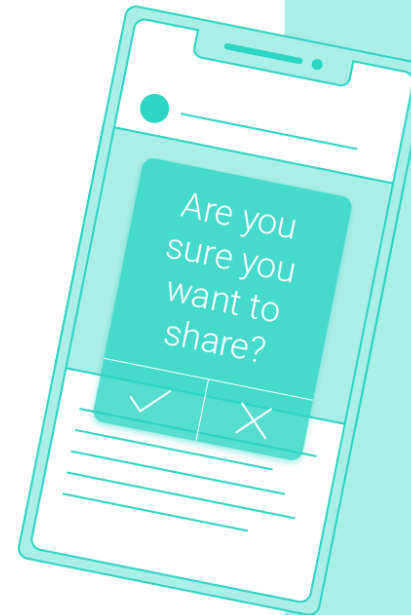
# Sanitize before you share

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](https://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](https://newslit.org/coronavirus) to learn more about sorting fact from fiction.

Want more? Try out our **Checkology® virtual classroom** at [checkology.org](https://checkology.org).  
Graphic created by the **News Literacy Project** [newslit.org](https://newslit.org)

# Thank you!



Give facts a fighting chance



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