



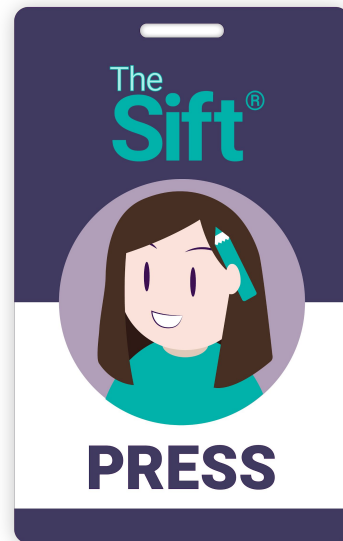
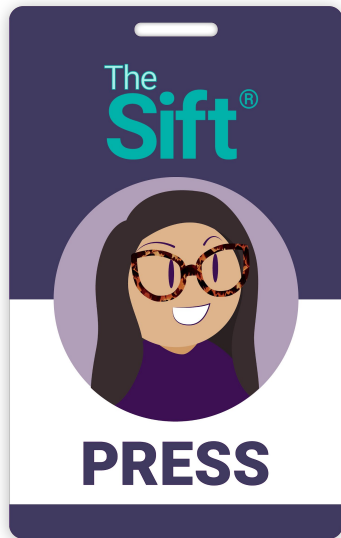
The Sift[®] News Goggles

Mobile news alerts on President Donald Trump's election outcome claims

Nov. 9, 2020

First things first

- Be sure to view these slides in presentation mode.
- Suzannah and Hannah, former reporters who work at NLP, are going to help you examine this topic through journalists' eyes.



President Donald Trump spoke during the early morning hours of Nov. 4 following Election Day, alleging fraud and claiming victory even as results in several states were still uncertain.

News organizations that sent mobile news alerts about Trump's remarks varied in how they handled the claims.
Let's take a closer look!



FOX NEWS

Wed 1:35 AM

Breaking News

Trump claims victory despite many states remaining undecided, hints at Supreme Court action, in defiant WH speech



WASH POST

Wed 2:24 AM

With millions of votes yet to be counted, Trump falsely asserts election fraud, pledges to mount legal challenge to state results



REUTERS

Wed 1:42 AM

President Trump falsely claims victory, even as votes in Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Georgia are still being counted



NBC NEWS

Wed 6:00 AM

Fact check

With nine states still counting millions of votes, Trump falsely claims he won



CNN

Wed 2:12 AM

Trump's chilling threat to votes

Without basis, the President goes after legitimate vote-counting efforts and falsely claims victory as the nation awaits answers in a tight race

Read through these five alerts (time stamps in Central time). What do you notice about them? Which words stand out? Do you see any similarities or differences? Click to the next slides for our thoughts.

News alert 1:
The Washington Post



WASH POST

Wed 2:24 AM

With millions of votes yet to be counted, Trump
falsely asserts election fraud, pledges to mount
legal challenge to state results



What do you think of this phrasing, “falsely asserts”? This is a direct call-out to inaccurate information given by the president.

Some criticized journalists for not calling his remarks “lies.”



The first phrase — about “millions of votes” — stands out to me. It adds context and perhaps helps explain why The Washington Post used such strong language. This alert still recaps what the president said, but journalists also seem to be fact-checking his remarks in real time.

News alert 2:
CNN



CNN

Wed 2:12 AM

Trump's chilling threat to votes

Without basis, the President goes after legitimate vote-counting efforts and falsely claims victory as the nation awaits answers in a tight race



Compared with The Washington Post, CNN took an even stronger approach in identifying falsehoods and claims.



Yes, one consideration is how to best serve the public interest. Calling out inaccuracies and falsehoods, including lies, by elected officials is part of a journalist's job. Like the Post's alert, CNN offers context: "as the nation awaits answers in a tight race." Also, CNN's alert has a headline with another tone-setting phrase: "chilling threat." Is this biased, loaded language or necessary context as part of the watchdog role of journalists in a democracy?

News alert 3:
Reuters



REUTERS

Wed 1:42 AM

President Trump **falsely claims** victory, even as votes in Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Georgia are still being counted



“Falsely” seems to be the most common framing so far. Like CNN, notice that Reuters also opts for the verb “claims.” News organizations commonly use the word “said” when paraphrasing or quoting sources. This stronger word choice of “claims” tells readers that whatever was said is disputed or lacks evidence.



The context that Reuters gives is more detailed and specific because it offers state names: “even as votes in Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Georgia are still being counted.”

News alert 4:
Fox News



FOX NEWS

Wed 1:35 AM

Breaking News

Trump claims victory despite many states remaining undecided, hints at Supreme Court action, in defiant WH speech



Fox News uses the verb “claims” but does not include the word “falsely.” How does this change the tone of the alert? Like the other alerts, Fox also points out that the outcome is still uncertain.



Notice how Fox describes Trump’s speech: “defiant.” What effect does this word have? How does it portray the president’s views?

News alert 5:
NBC News



NBC NEWS

Wed 6:00 AM

Fact check

With nine states still counting millions of votes,
Trump falsely claims he won



Here again we see “falsely claims” along with more context. This time, the context is not as specific as state names, but it is more detailed than other alerts because it includes the number of states still counting votes.



While several of the other news organizations seem to be fact-checking the president through word choice and framing, NBC News specifically labels this alert as a fact-check. Does this label change your perception of the president’s remarks?

News Goggles: Next steps

Discuss: What thoughts do you have about how these five news organizations worded their alerts? Which alerts did you think were the best? Why? Which, if any, were problematic? Why? Did any of the word choices show potential bias? If so, how could those alerts have been more balanced and accurate?

Idea: Have students review the Nov. 4 post-Election Day front page of [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#) — which featured a headline [criticized](#) as a [“both sides”](#) approach that spread inaccurate information — along with other front pages collected by [Poynter](#). Do students agree with how the Journal-Constitution handled the election uncertainty? Why or why not? Do they agree or disagree with the criticism aimed at the headline? How does it compare with the other headlines? Which headline do students think is best? If the class had to write a headline for this story, what would it be?

News Goggles: Next steps

Related: [“MSNBC, major networks interrupt Trump’s falsehood-laden speech to fact-check; Fox, CNN carry in full”](#) (Bill Keveney, USA Today).

[“‘Without evidence’ Is A New Catchphrase at NPR”](#) (Kelly McBride, NPR).

[“How newspaper front pages treated an Election Day with no clear winner”](#) (Marisa Iati, The Washington Post).



This exercise originated in the Nov. 9, 2020, issue of The Sift® newsletter from the News Literacy Project. You can read archives of the newsletter and subscribe [here](#).



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