

# Tips and Tools for Verifying Information

“Don’t believe everything you read” is even more relevant in today’s world of information bombardment. Question everything! As voters, we must understand what are real facts and what are opinions, beliefs, or possibly malicious stories that are untrue. As consumers of news, it is important for us to know the difference between real news and real facts, versus fake news, biased news, propaganda, alternative facts, and simple, old-fashioned mistakes.

## Step One: Before relying on information, consider these Essential Questions

- **Who or what is the source** of this information? Is this source an authority? What are its/his/her credentials?
- **Who is the intended audience?** Is it a specific group?
- **What is the purpose** of sharing this information? To inform? Persuade? Entertain? Sell something? Influence? Create outrage? Promote propaganda?
- Can the **accuracy** of this information be corroborated?
- Does it use sensational or balanced **language**?
- **What evidence** is cited to support this information? Is the evidence used accurately?
- Does this source **examine the big picture**? Is an exception being used to prove the broader rule?
- **What is the context** for the information presented?
- **How current** is this information?
- Is this **fact or opinion**? An opinion is not “truth” but rather a point of view. Be clear what are real facts.

If you are not sure that something is true, **don't share it!** That will only spread the fake news.

## Step Two: Consult These Reliable Resources

### Online Fact-checking sites

- <https://www.factcheck.org/>
- <http://www.politifact.com/>
- <http://realorsatire.com/>
- <https://www.snopes.com/>

Professional fact-checkers “read laterally.” That is, they open a new tab for each element of a source they want to verify, starting with the URL. They check “across” the various sources, not just within a source.

### Some reliable news sources

Reliable news organizations have built a strong reputation for integrity and high journalistic standards. These include: ABC news, CBS news, NBC news, Reuters, BBC News, NPR/PBS, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, and the Associated Press (AP). If you’re not sure, check reliable sources for analysis of the publication.

### Other useful resources:

- Facebook Tips for spotting false news: <https://www.facebook.com/help/188118808357379>
- The Poynter Institute brings together an international fact checking network: <https://www.poynter.org/channels/fact-checking>
- The Trust Project (Markkula Center for Ethics) brings together many news media to build a more trustworthy and trusted press. This international group has launched “trust indicators” to help identify trustworthy news sources: <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/journalism-ethics/programs/the-trust-project/trust-project-launches-indicators/>
- Ballotpedia: a nonpartisan nonprofit online encyclopedia committed to neutrality covering local, state and national politics and elections: <https://ballotpedia.org/>
- League of Women Voters: voting rights and nonpartisan information: <https://www.lwv.org/>

**PHOTOS OR VIDEOS ON ANY SITE MAY HAVE BEEN FAKED OR ALTERED.** For tips on spotting changed images, see <https://www.poynter.org/news/three-ways-spot-if-image-has-been-manipulated>.

**REMEMBER! JUST BECAUSE YOU SEE IT ON THE INTERNET, THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT TRUE!  
TAKE A MOMENT TO VERIFY THE INFORMATION BEFORE YOU POST.**

*Prepared by the League of Women Voters Palo Alto, California. Includes content contributed by: the League of Women Voters of Berks County, Pennsylvania; Tessa Lyons, Facebook; Sarah McGrew, Stanford University; and Daniel Russell, Google.*

**THANK YOU!**



## Tips for verifying information found on Google

- Check the URL and domain name, including the end ".edu" ".com" ".gov" etc.
- Look for the "About" or "Contact" or similar information on the website
- Search widely and "laterally" (go to other websites) to check other viewpoints on the same topic.



climate change disproved

Where does this source originate? Abbreviation at end of URL indicates the United Kingdom.

'Global warming the greatest scam in history' claims founder of ...  
<https://www.express.co.uk> News > Clarifications and Corrections  
 Jun 9, 2015 - climate-change AP. Climate change has been 'disproved' and polar ice is 'increasing'. John Coleman, who co-founded the Weather Channel, shocked academics by insisting the theory of man-made climate change was no longer scientifically credible. Instead, what 'little evidence' there is for rising global ...  
 You visited this page on 3/1/18.  
<https://www.express.co.uk/news/clarifications-corrections/526191/Climate-change-is-a-lie-global-warming-not-real-claims-weather-channel-founder>

What else can we learn about this man's credentials? Highlight his name, right click, then select Search Google for "John Coleman."

What is the political reputation of this publication? A BBC News review (9/30/09) of several publications found that this one is conservative.



Where is the "About" page? No information on publisher.

Is writer a science expert? Search of his other articles shows he's a generalist.

Headline language balanced or sensational? "Greatest scam in history" is emotionally charged.

Current? No.



## How to get news on Facebook

- Under Trending, click on an article. Facebook will give you the source of the story.
- Hold your cursor over title to see other articles on the same topic below the one you chose.
- **Read articles critically, using the Essential Questions to sift for truth.**

How does Facebook determine what to list under Trending?

What's "Trending" is different for each of us. Select one of five icons for type of news: Top Trends, Politics, Science, Sports, and Entertainment. Based on your choice, information from your profile, and data from your online activity, Facebook selects content it thinks will interest you.



Why do you see certain ads on Facebook?

Facebook uses information about you to select the ads you see. To manage the ads:

- Click the X or down arrow in the upper right corner of ad.
- Select "Why am I seeing this?" for explanation.
- Add or remove yourself from this ad audience.

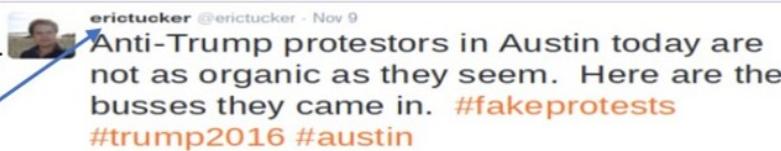


## Some ways to question the accuracy of Tweets

Anyone with a Twitter account can post just about anything, and only "people of public interest" can, at present, be authenticated with a blue check next to their name.

A recent MIT study reports that false information spreads six times faster on Twitter than what's true. Sensational headlines are click bait—they grab our attention. Even though a tweet cites a source for its information, it may misstate or twist what the source says or what photos actually represent.

Who is the author? Right click and "search Google for @ericktucker" shows NY Times article (11/20/16) report that this is fake. His Twitter account claims he is "Accusedly libertarian."



What do other sources say? Do a quick Google search to check whether these claims have been fact checked or whether there is any additional information about protests in Austin after the election. The NY Times article is headed "How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study." It states that this Tweet was shared at least 16,000 times on Twitter and 350,000 times on Facebook.

What is the evidence? Think about the pictures. Do we know where they were taken? Is there any proof that they represent what Tucker claims?

