

VERIFICATION FOR ALL: EVERYDAY TIPS

Understanding and Investigating Mis/Disinformation



There's a lot of information online and it can be challenging to sort through it to determine what is true or trustworthy. The good news is there are simple skills and strategies we can apply to help answer these questions.

3 KEY CHECKS (+ 1 BONUS CHECK)

01 **Check the Claim** — A quick way to verify information is to see if reputable sources have reported it. Type keywords or copy and paste a headline into a search engine to see if reliable sources are reporting the same information.

02 **Check the Source** — If a source of information is unfamiliar, stop and do some quick research to determine what biases might be present. Often the fastest way to do this is to check Wikipedia, which can offer valuable clues about the reputation of people and organizations.

03 **Check the Image** — Sites like TinEye and Google allow you to search for an image the same way you search for text. Google in particular makes the process easy. When using the Chrome browser, you can right-click any image and select “Search Google for Image” from the contextual menu. Reverse-image searching can demonstrate if a picture has been altered or used out of context.

DON'T FORGET: Check Your Emotions — A lot of information online is designed to play to people's emotions. If a story or post causes you to feel a strong emotion, it is likely that someone wanted you to feel that way. If you feel outraged, disgusted, or even joyful, that's a sign to stop and verify information before believing or sharing it.



6 STRATEGIES TO AMP YOUR VERIFICATION GAME

- 01 Search Google News** — When checking claims it can be helpful to use Google News, which weeds out a lot of the ‘noise’ to focus on results from professional publications.
—— This works especially well for rumours — if Justin Bieber really died, many sources would be reporting it. The absence of coverage can sometimes provide a clue about the truth of a claim.
- 02 Look for Fact-Checks** — When false claims go viral online, they are usually quickly debunked by reputable sources (Snopes, AFP, Politifact etc.) When searching claims, existing well-researched fact-checks can offer a quick shortcut to determining if a claim is credible or not.
- 03 ‘Trade up’ to a Better Source** — Sometimes faulty or low-quality sources publish true stories, or stories that are mostly accurate. But that doesn’t mean you should treat this information as definitive. If you find information on a source that is less than credible, look for comparable information from a more reliable source.
- 04 Avoid Rabbit Holes** — Sometimes, your search can take you down confusing paths or deep into Internet rabbit holes. If you find yourself feeling frustrated or getting more confused, it’s best to stop and start the search over. Try using different search terms or search engines, or limit your search by using quotations marks. A minor change of approach can often put you back on the right track.
- 05 Try to Get the Whole Story** — A lot of misinformation spreads because real images, quotations, or stories are presented or framed out of context. Even if you can verify, for instance, that a photo is real, it’s worth looking to trusted sources to make sure you understand the larger story around the photo.
- 06 When in Doubt, Don’t Share** — These skills won’t work 100% of the time, and you may not always be able to confidently determine credibility. This is especially true when major news is breaking and facts are unconfirmed. When you aren’t sure if information is reliable, the best course of action is to not share it.

