

## 10 Tips for Fighting Fake News

# How to Fact Check Like a Pro



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See also [CUNY J-School Fact Checking, Verification & Fake News Guide](#)  
& [CUNY J-School Fake News Cheat Sheet](#)

### How to Detect Fake News:

- 1 Be skeptical**—verify before you share. Journalists assume they are wrong, and seek corroborating evidence.
- 2 Create your own habit of fact checking**—it’s a civic survival skill and duty in a [“post-truth” world](#). Misinformation and disinformation are being used as weapons, to [“undermine trust, create divisions, and foment chaos,”](#) in our country.
- 3 Where to start**—ask yourself:
  - **Who says?**
    - Scrutinize the publication sharing the story and the sources they are quoting. Are they even giving a source?
    - Check the “About Us” page or whoxy.com for domain registry info.
  - **How do they know?**
    - Have you heard of them? What makes them an authoritative source for anything?
  - **Are they biased?**
    - Does the story only present one side of a debate?
    - Look for them on sourcwatch.org.
  - **Does this news turn up on any trusted site?**
    - Search to see whether or how the news is being reported on legitimate journalism sites (but be wary of mistaking quantity for quality—fake news tends to proliferate).
  - **What don’t I know?**
    - What facts are being left out? Do other reliable sources challenge these facts?
- 4 “Smell test” or “Gut check”**—does this seem unbelievable to you? Either way, verify it.
- 5 Do they cite their sources of information?** Then you should go to the original source.
- 6 Be aware of your own confirmation bias**—[“subconscious tendency to seek and interpret information and other evidence in ways that affirm our existing beliefs, ideas, expectations”](#)
- 7 Is the article or information making you really angry and emotional?** Maybe because it was manufactured or doctored to exploit your biases.

### You Might Also Like:

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[CUNY J-School Fake News Cheat Sheet](#)



## Fact Checking:

**8 Write fast, but fact check slowly.** Create a habit to get your brain out of writing mode, and into fact-checking mode.

- Change the font, background color, or text size to [trick your brain that it's looking at something new](#).
- **Get physical with your work**, print it out, then go through every sentence and **circle** every fact.
- **Read your work aloud** to make sure you catch anything you missed, like spell check errors.
- **Most common errors:**
  - Names, titles, place names
  - Statistics
  - References to time, distance, date, season, location, physical descriptions
  - Argument or narrative that depends on fact
  - Historical facts
  - Beware of superlatives like: "only," "first" and "most"

**9 Where to check:**

- **Primary Sources:**
  - Government reports (infodocket.com, everycrsreport.com)
  - Data (state, federal and municipal open data portals)
  - Court documents (search LexisNexis or courtreference.com)
  - Original scholarly research (found in Google Scholar™, or open source repositories like academicworks.cuny.edu or Base-Search.net)
- **Secondary sources** found in databases at work, and in your public, state and university libraries:
  - Search articles in databases like Nexis® or LexisNexis Newsdesk®
  - Search for data on Statista.com or Data.gov
- **Ask an expert:** a scholar, government agency employee, or industry representative.
- **Search [fact-checking sites](#)** to see if the information has already been debunked.

**10 Always give attribution, and be transparent about where you get your info.**

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