

Tips for Analyzing News Sources



Step 1: Title/Domain Analysis.

Words like “.wordpress” or “blogger” in the domain usually signifies it’s a personal blog rather than a news source. Variations of well known websites such as “.com.co,” is usually a sign that the website is fake version of a source. However, remember that foreign reputable news organizations may have these country-specific domains.

Step 2: About Us Analysis.

A total lack of About Us, Contact Us, or any other type of identifying information may mean that the website is not a legitimate source of information.

Step 3: Source Analysis.

Does the website mention/link to a study or source? Look up the source/study. Do you think it’s being accurately reflected and reported? Are officials being cited? Can you confirm their quotes elsewhere?

Step 4: Writing Style Analysis.

Does the website follow AP Style Guide or another style guide? Does the site frequently use ALL CAPS in headlines and/or body text? Does the headline or body of the text use words like WOW!, SLAUGHTER!, DESTROY!?! This stylistic practice and these types of hyperbolic word choices are often used to create emotional responses with readers that is avoided in more traditional styles of journalism.

Step 5: Aesthetic Analysis.

Like the style-guide, many fake and questionable news sites utilize very bad design. Usually this means screens are cluttered with text and heavy-handed photoshopping or born digital images.

Step 6: Social Media Analysis.

Look up the website on Facebook. Do the headlines and posts rely on sensational or provocative language-- aka clickbait-- in order to attract attention and encourage likes, clickthroughs, and shares? Do the headlines and social media descriptions match or accurately reflect the content of the linked article?





Think Critically - Ask Questions

Ask these questions whenever you discover or discuss new information.

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... benefits from this? ... is this harmful to? ... makes decisions about this? ... is most directly affected? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... have you also heard discuss this? ... would be the best person to consult? ... will be the key people in this? ... deserves recognition for this?
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... are the strengths/weaknesses? ... is another perspective? ... is another alternative? ... would be a counter-argument? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is the best/worst case scenario? ... is most/least important? ... can we do to make a positive change? ... is getting in the way of our action?
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... would we see this in the real world? ... are there similar concepts/situations? ... is there the most need for this? ... in the world would this be a problem? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... can we get more information? ... do we go for help with this? ... will this idea take us? ... are the areas for improvement?
When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is this acceptable/unacceptable? ... would this benefit our society? ... would this cause a problem? ... is the best time to take action? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... will we know we've succeeded? ... has this played a part in our history? ... can we expect this to change? ... should we ask for help with this?
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is this a problem/challenge? ... is it relevant to me/others? ... is this the best/worst scenario? ... are people influenced by this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... should people know about this? ... has it been this way for so long? ... have we allowed this to happen? ... is there a need for this today?
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... is this similar to _____? ... does this disrupt things? ... do we know the truth about this? ... will we approach this safely? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... does this benefit us/others? ... does this harm us/others? ... do we see this in the future? ... can we change this for our good?

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Additional resources for evaluating news and other information sources

COD Library Source Evaluation Guide - <http://www.codlrc.org/evaluating>