



# WORKBOOK

Get Informed



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This resource aims to equip participants with a knowledge of how to gather and evaluate information.

## Media Overload

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We are bombarded daily by information through online sources, TV, radio, print and social media, but how do we know if what we read or hear is accurate or factual?

## How can we identify what information is real?



It is easy to be swayed into believing something if it is repeated often enough, if it is in print or comes from someone we admire or respect. This might not be a problem in some circumstances, but in order to make informed decisions or access information on important matters such as voting, welfare, services, products or even research for academic work, it is important that the sources we rely on are accurate.

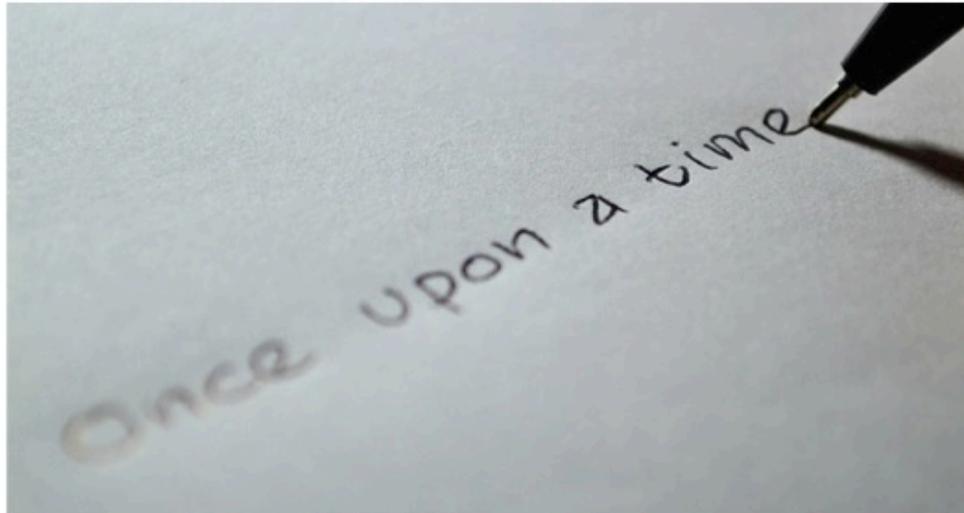
## Searching for answers

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When researching any topic, the internet has become the main port of call. The term 'google' has entered the dictionary as a verb meaning 'to search for something on the internet using the Google search engine'. There are a number of similar search engines which all connect us to a seemingly limitless wealth of data.

## What's the story?



But how do we determine what is a credible source of information? The expression 'fake news' is becoming increasingly popular and it is difficult to filter through all the sources online to find what is credible and what is fake.

Headlines can often be misleading or sensational in order to attract readers known as 'click-bait', so it is important to investigate the full story. If it is too incredible, check to see if the information comes from a satirical source such as [waterfordwhispersnews.com](http://waterfordwhispersnews.com)

## Website analysis

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**Click on the website from where the information originated and check:**

- Website mission
- Website name
- Contact details
- Website content
- Dates of posts



Check the Website that the information has originated from. Is there information about the website contributors and contact information? What is the mission or ethos of the website? Is the information updated regularly?

## Website Name

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### Reputable Websites

<https://ec.europa.eu>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org>

[www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com)

[www.harvard.edu](http://www.harvard.edu)

### Unreliable Websites

<http://therapistinabox.com>

<http://www.curezone.org>

<http://doctoryourself.com/>



The name of a website that has produced the information is often an indication of how credible it is. Websites such as the Mayo clinic and WebMD are known to provide information from leading experts in the medical field. Websites with .edu or .gov are most likely to be authentic and credible websites. Don't rely on Facebook posts, blogs, vlogs and other self-penned sites for factual, unbiased information unless you are sure of the author's credentials and expertise on the subject.

## Academic and State sources



Articles and information with attached academic sources which support the content are better than those without.

Academic sources can be relied upon for accuracy as the research that contributes to the information is usually carried out in an objective, scientific manner and the credibility of the academic institution attached to the research is at stake.

Government agencies in most countries can be relied upon to provide factual information. Information for the public can be found on government websites, publications or through services in the community such as libraries, medical centres and community offices.

Websites such as Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, have sources attached to information which can be checked and verified but it is important to note that information can be edited by anyone using the website.

## Agenda and Biases



An 'agenda' is a secret aim or reason for doing something. No matter what the subject is, everyone has an agenda; the politician who is looking for votes, the entrepreneur who wants to sell you something, the charity that wants you to support their cause, they all want to persuade you to adopt their way of thinking. Even media outlets have their own slant on issues and events depending on who controls the organisation. We would like to believe that reporters are objective but every writer has an agenda and will use various persuasive tactics to get you to their way of thinking, often actively misleading the reader. Even if they give the facts of a situation they might omit some of them to influence your perception of events. When you know that America's CBS News is conservative and ABC News liberal, it is easier to understand their reporting on various news items. Most outlets in any country will lean one way or another or have a 'for' or 'against' stance on social and political issues. To get an accurate picture of events you need to look at an issue from every angle rather than from a single perspective.

## Research the author

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**Is it a real person?**

**Are they respected  
and well known  
in their specific field?**



With all this in mind, it is important to check out the author of the source. Who are they, what is their expertise on the subject, are they sponsored by any company, organisation or political party, what is their agenda?

## Sources to avoid

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**Parroting**

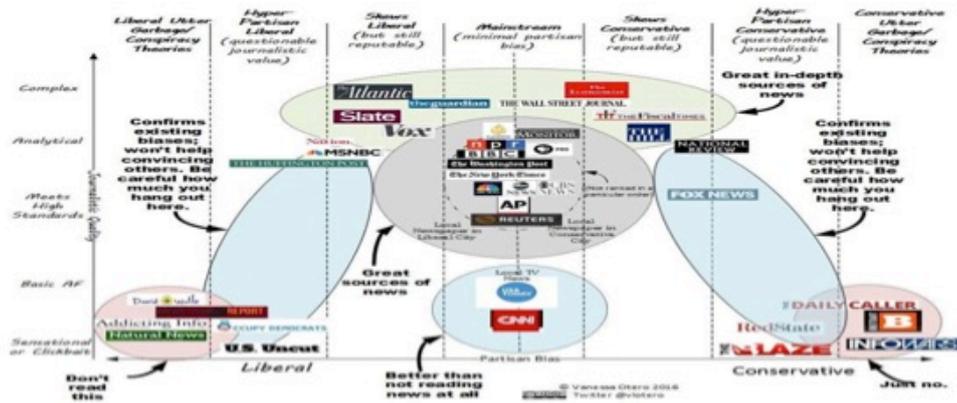
## Emails from unknown sources



'Parroting' is when a piece of information is repeated over and over leading to people believing it to be true. It is important to ascertain where a piece of information originated as the person who gave you the information might be a trusted and respected person but their source might be unreliable.

Emails and posts can be forwarded multiple times making it difficult to find the original source or to know the agenda of the author of the item of information. This mode of information exchange is often used by individuals and organisations with extremist views and can be targeted at vulnerable members of society.

# Activity – Reporting Biases



Pick a current news topic. Using the following chart, compare the reporting of the item from a number of the media outlets taken from the conservative and liberal sides of the graph.

# Thanks!

All photographs courtesy of Pixabay.com

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