



# How to Recognize Fake News

# 36%

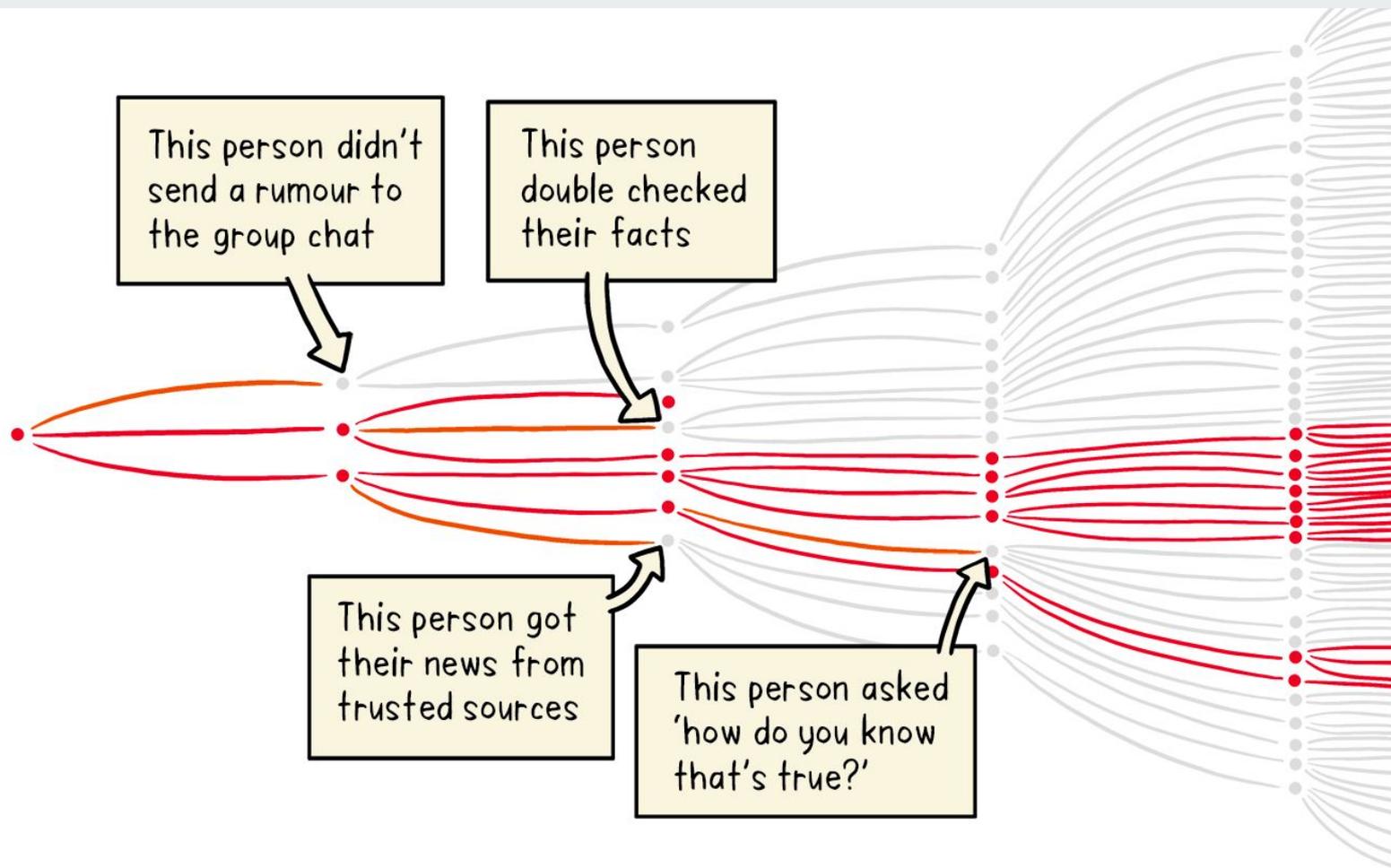
of frequent social media users held at least one false belief about COVID-19.

*Going Viral: How Social Media is Making the Spread of the Coronavirus Worse.* The Reboot Foundation (2020)



**#DidYouKnow**

News  
Literacy  
Project





# What is Fake News?



## Fake News is NOT:

- News you disagree with
- A story that paints a person you admire in a negative light
- A problem for only one side of the political spectrum



# What is Fake News?

**Fake News** - news, stories, or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive readers. Often, these stories are created to push a political agenda, influence people's views, or cause confusion among readers.

“The public is becoming heartily sick of fake news and fake extras. Some of the newspapers in this town have printed so many lying dispatches that people are beginning to mistrust any statement they make.”

# “Yellow Journalism”



According to Public Radio International’s description, yellow journalism is:

- Any journalism that treated news in an unprofessional or unethical manner.
- Created a sensation that would prompt people to buy copies of the paper.
- Sought out crime, scandal and salacious detail.
- Left out facts that got in the way of a gripping story.

# Sources of News



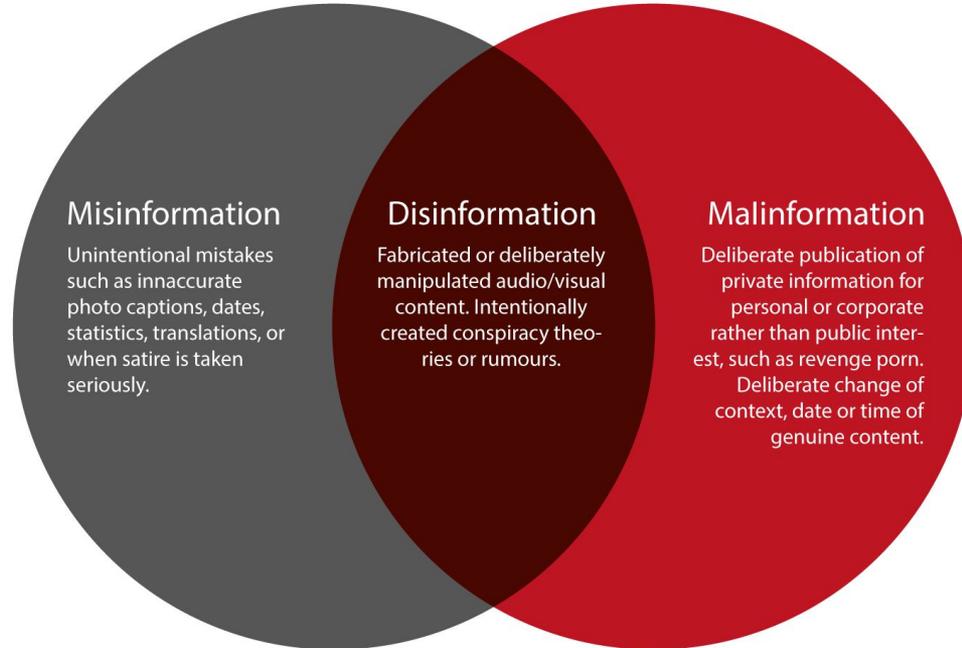
- Radio
- Newspapers
- Television
- Word of Mouth
- The Internet
- Social Media

# Misinformation, Disinformation, or Malinformation?



FALSENESS

INTENT TO HARM



# Types of Fake News

- Misinformation
- Disinformation
- False Headlines
- Social Media Sharing
- Satire



# Exercise Skepticism



Take in any new information with a bit of doubt, whether that information is coming from the news or social media or from a friend.

Expect the source to show their work. How did they come to this conclusion? What sources are they basing this on? How does it compare with other outlets?

**Ask Questions.**

# Consider the Source

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- Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.
- Look for signs that the website isn't a legitimate news organization.
  - URLs ending in ".com.co"
  - Check the About Us section for more insight into the publisher, leadership, and mission statement
- Think about how you found the article
  - If the content was in your social media feed or was promoted on a clickbait website, proceed with caution -- even if it was shared by a friend.

# Consider the Source

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<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ABCnewscomco.png>

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a6/ABC\\_News\\_solid\\_black\\_logo.svg/220px-ABC\\_News\\_solid\\_black\\_logo.svg.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a6/ABC_News_solid_black_logo.svg/220px-ABC_News_solid_black_logo.svg.png)

# Editorials, Opinions... Are They News?

There are several different types of opinion content that newspapers publish under their opinion section. These pieces can cover a wide range of viewpoints.

An **Op-Ed** is an opinionated piece submitted to the newspaper to be published.

An **Editorial** is a piece that presents the viewpoint of the newspaper's editorial board.

A **Column** is an article that often contains opinions. Columnists are often some of the most well-known names at a news organization. Columns can be personal stories or calls to action. Smaller newspapers often publish syndicated columns by national authors.

The screenshot shows a news website's opinion section. At the top, there is a horizontal bar with a teal and orange gradient. Below it, the word "Opinions" is written in a small, dark font. The main content area is a grid of six article cards. Each card features a small profile picture of the author, a headline, and the author's name. The articles are: 1. "Time for Democrats to get much tougher with William Barr" by Greg Sargent. 2. "Sean Hannity spreads fake news in New Hampshire" by Erik Wemple. 3. "Why Trump's rage is exactly what conservatives want" by Paul Waldman. 4. "The Democratic race isn't going to be pretty" by Ruth Marcus. 5. "Klobuchar's friends tell a different story about her" by Jennifer Rubin. 6. "Trump's budget shows how badly we need bipartisan compromise" by Henry Olsen. Below this grid, there is a section header "OPINION" in a larger, bold font, followed by a right-pointing chevron. Underneath, there is a profile picture of James Freeman and the headline "Not Even Socialists Believe in Socialism Anymore" by James Freeman | Best of the Web. Below that is another article by Joseph Epstein titled "The Democrats Gave In to Radicals and Gave Up on Common Sense". Further down is an article by Tunku Varadarajan titled "The Cow Dung Cure for Coronavirus". To the right of the main content, there is a vertical sidebar. It starts with the word "Opinion" and a right-pointing chevron. Below that is a large image of a woman with red hair and blue face paint, wearing a "TRUMP" shirt, looking through binoculars. To the left of this image is the text "Damon Winter and Devi Lockwood" and the headline "What a Trump Rally Looks Like From the Inside". Below the image is the text "The president was in New Hampshire, and so were his admirers." and "4h ago". Below the image are two more article cards: one by Shosh Shlam and Hilla Medalia titled "Where Being a Single Woman Is Not O.K.", and one by Paul Krugman titled "How Trump Got Tricked Down". At the bottom of the sidebar is an article by Ross Douthat titled "Trump's De-Polarizing Architecture Plan".

Opinions

Time for Democrats to get much tougher with William Barr  
By Greg Sargent

Sean Hannity spreads fake news in New Hampshire  
By Erik Wemple

Why Trump's rage is exactly what conservatives want  
By Paul Waldman

The Democratic race isn't going to be pretty  
By Ruth Marcus

Klobuchar's friends tell a different story about her  
By Jennifer Rubin

Trump's budget shows how badly we need bipartisan compromise  
By Henry Olsen

OPINION

Not Even Socialists Believe in Socialism Anymore  
By James Freeman | Best of the Web

The Democrats Gave In to Radicals and Gave Up on Common Sense  
By Joseph Epstein | Commentary

The Cow Dung Cure for Coronavirus  
By Tunku Varadarajan | Commentary

Opinion

Damon Winter and Devi Lockwood  
What a Trump Rally Looks Like From the Inside  
The president was in New Hampshire, and so were his admirers.  
4h ago

Shosh Shlam and Hilla Medalia  
Where Being a Single Woman Is Not O.K.

Dating is hard. A government campaign to get you married is worse.  
Feb. 11 368 comments

Paul Krugman  
How Trump Got Tricked Down

Ross Douthat  
Trump's De-Polarizing Architecture Plan

# Read Beyond the Headlines



- Headlines, even from legitimate sources, can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. They rarely contain all the important information.
- Look for textual clues -- are there any spelling errors? Lots of ALL CAPS, or dramatic punctuation?!?!?!?!?!? If so, this article is fake. Reputable sources have high proofreading and grammatical standards.
- Social media posts that are designed to go viral often start something like, “I’m going to lose friends for this, but...”

# Read Beyond the Headlines

**P** Paso Robles Daily News  
4 hrs · 🌐

Paso Robles EMS responds to man with flu symptoms who had returned from China



PASOROBLESAILYNEWS.COM  
Paso Robles EMS responds to man with flu symptoms who had returned from China

Like Comment Share

👍👎👤 27

35 shares

35 shares

Most Relevant ▾

 **Stacey Matherne**  
This headline is misleading. Lots of people will skip reading the article and start spreading rumors that the coronavirus is here in our city. Irresponsible journalism.  
3h Love Reply 6

 **Jason Smith**  
You are absolutely correct!  
3h Like Reply 3

 **Matt Mohler**  
Stacey Matherne  
WE'RE ALL GONA DIE!  
2h Like Reply 2

 **Sadie Whitener**  
Totally agree, this is so frustrating  
1h Like Reply

An example from February of a misleading headline  
<https://pasoroblespress.com/news/clickbait-headline-preys-on-coronavirus-fears/>

 **click·bait**  
/'klikbāt/

*noun* INFORMAL

(on the Internet) content whose main purpose is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular web page.  
"these recent reports of the show's imminent demise are hyperbolic clickbait"

# Read Beyond the Headlines

The prolonged use of medical masks can be uncomfortable. However, it does not lead to CO2 intoxication nor oxygen deficiency.

While wearing a medical mask, make sure it fits properly and that it is tight enough to allow you to breathe normally. Do not re-use a disposable mask and always change it as soon as it gets damp.

\* Medical masks (also known as surgical masks) are flat or pleated; they are affixed to the head with straps or have ear loops.

**FACT:**  
The prolonged use of medical masks\* when properly worn, DOES NOT cause CO2 intoxication nor oxygen deficiency



World Health Organization #Coronavirus #COVID19 5 June 2020

The World Health Organization website has a page dedicated to Covid-19 Mythbusting, from 5G mobile networks to whether shoes can spread the virus

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

# Check the Author



Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?

- Has the author published anything else? Be suspicious if the byline, which names the author, is a celebrity writing for a little-known site, or if the author's contact information is a gmail address. Is there a byline at all?
- If they have published something else, or claim to have won awards (one author's bio on "abcnews.com.co" claimed, falsely, that they were a "doctor" with "fourteen Peabody awards and a handful of Pulitzer prizes"), check to see if they are legitimate.

# Supporting Sources?



- Who is (or is not) quoted, and what do they say?
- Is this information paid for or sponsored by a company, politician, or other potentially biased source?
- Is this information available on other sites?
- What is the evidence and how is it presented?
  - Are the numbers presented in context?



# Can I trust an Anonymous source?

News organizations tend to only use anonymous sources when they can't find other sources to provide the same information on the record. In these cases, the information provided is proven to be extremely important and can't be obtained any other way.

While anonymous to the public, these sources are known to the reporters and have demonstrated their credibility.

# Check the Date



When a big news story breaks, people look to share any information that seems relevant, and old news stories can often find their way into the mix.

Just because an old article has been reposted, doesn't mean it is relevant to current events. Old articles can be distorted to twist the meaning, or make misleading claims to try and relate it to current events. Old stories can also be taken out of context.

Especially during a pandemic, news changes rapidly -- what was correct even a week ago might not be accurate information now.

# A Note about Breaking News



MEDIA

## 'Miami Herald' Journalist Explains How A Hoax Tweet Affected Her Reporting On Shooting

February 27, 2018 · 4:03 PM ET  
Heard on All Things Considered

*This is a developing story. Some facts reported by the media may later turn out to be wrong. We will focus on reports from police officials and other authorities, credible news outlets and reporters who are at the scene, and we will update as the situation develops.*

In extreme breaking news cases like a mass shooting, information is coming in quickly and not all of it may be accurate. News organizations try to verify as much as they can, but facts may change as the story develops.

# Is it a Joke?

Popular websites like The Onion and the Babylon Bee create satire pieces meant to look like real news articles. If it sounds too crazy to be true... it often isn't.

Satire articles are typically clearly labeled, but not everyone knows, or cares, to check.



The image shows a screenshot of a news article from 'the ONION'. The website's navigation bar includes 'HOME', 'LATEST', 'POLITICS', 'SPORTS', and 'LOCAL'. The main image depicts a drive-thru COVID-19 injection site with workers in white protective suits and face shields. Below the image, the text reads: 'NEWS IN BRIEF', 'More Cities Offering Drive-Thru Covid Injection Sites To Put Citizens Out Of Misery', and 'STANFORD, CA—In a survey of how the nation's local officials have responded to the pandemic in the absence of a consistent federal approach, Stanford University researchers confirmed Monday that more cities have begun offering drive-thru Covid-19...'

# Check Your Biases



## con·fir·ma·tion bi·as

noun

the tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs or theories.

Confirmation bias is a term from psychology that attempts to explain how people make decisions and interpret new information.

Everyone has opinions.

Even the information itself can be biased.



## Top Online News Media Bias Ratings

AllSides media bias ratings are based on multi-partisan, scientific analysis. All ratings are based on online content only — not TV, print, or radio content. Ratings do not reflect accuracy or credibility; they speak to perspective only. Visit AllSides.com to view over 600 media bias ratings.



LEFT LEAN LEFT CENTER LEAN RIGHT RIGHT

# Check Your Biases

AllSides has a page dedicated to Coronavirus coverage.

As with their main homepage, they breakdown the pandemic-related news by left, right, and center coverage.

AllSides™ NEWS BIAS TOPICS Q SEARCH CONNECT DICTIONARY SCHOOLS ABOUT

## Coronavirus

Background information, opportunities for conversation, and balanced news on the COVID-19 coronavirus from all sides of the political spectrum. Visit the COVID Tracking Project for [the latest state-by-state information, data and statistics on COVID-19 testing, deaths, recoveries and more.](#)

- Staying Safe and Sane**  
Physical and mental health
- Lifestyle**  
Life and work during social distancing
- Spotting Misinformation**  
Don't be fooled by fake news
- Learning Remotely**  
For teachers and parents
- #WeavingCommunity**  
Building community in times of crisis
- AllSides Connect**  
Have a powerful video conversation

### Background 1 of 6 [next >](#)

#### Coronavirus Pandemic Polling

What's your impression of the coronavirus situation in the U.S. today? Is it -- getting a lot worse, getting a little worse, staying about the same, getting a...

Gallup

#### Republicans, Democrats Move Even Further Apart in Coronavirus Concerns

As the number of coronavirus cases surges in many states across the United States, Republicans and Democrats increasingly view the disease in starkly different...

Pew Research Center

### Dialogue & Debate 1 of 4 [next >](#)

#### Are tracking apps a legitimate and proportional means to fight COVID-19?

The coronavirus has caused a global pandemic which has brought the world to a standstill. To combat the spread of the virus, many countries have started...

Kialo

#### Coronavirus Resources: Staying Connected in Times of Isolation

Living Room Conversations offers these resources to help you stay connected during a time when physical isolation is necessary for individual and community...

# Ask an Expert



Ask a librarian (information is what we do!), or consult a fact-checking site.

- [Snopes.com](https://snopes.com)
- [FactCheck.org](https://factcheck.org)
- [PolitiFact.com](https://politifact.com)
- [AllSides.com](https://allsides.com)
- [Not Real News \(apnews.com/hub/not-real-news\)](https://apnews.com/hub/not-real-news)

# Using a Fact Checking Site



## Facebook posts

stated on June 30, 2020 in a post on Facebook:

**An image from the St. Louis protest is “what MSM (mainstream media) won’t show you. Peaceful demonstrator pointing weapon at homeowner.”**



<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2020/jul/0/1/facebook-posts/photo-shows-st-louis-protesters-pointing-microphon/>

# How to Talk to Friends and Family...



## ... Who share misinformation

- Try to verify that the information is false or misleading *before* you engage
- To comment or not to comment?
- Consider the perspective of the person who shared the story
- Avoid escalation
- Be a resource for others

<https://pen.org/how-to-talk-to-friends-and-family-who-share-misinformation/>



**Any Questions?**

# Check Your Biases

U.S.

[More U.S.](#)

## Man accused of slapping teen Trump supporter during New Hampshire primary

New York Post · 8 hours ago



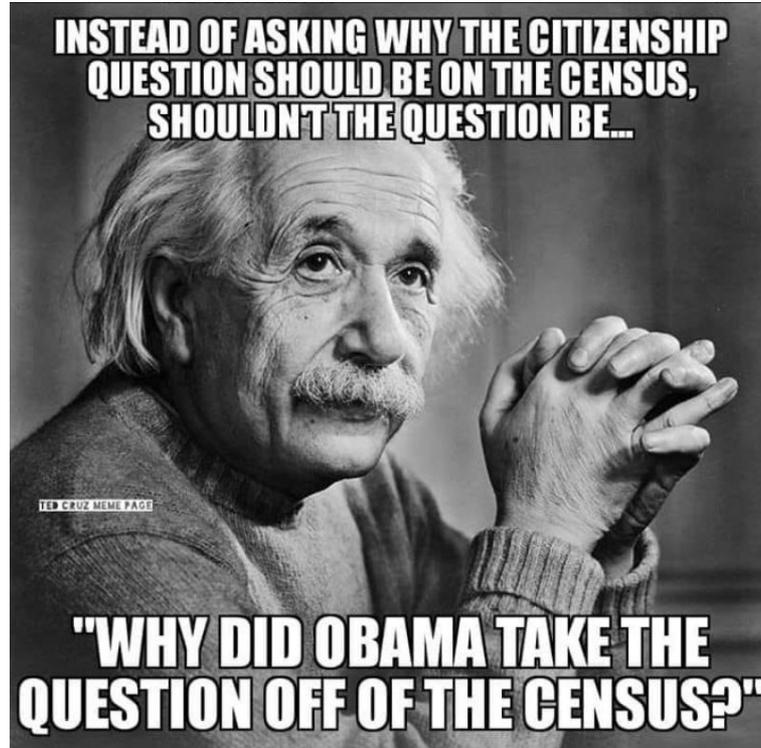
- **New Hampshire man arrested after allegedly assaulting pro-Trump teen at polling site**  
Fox News · Yesterday
- **Man arrested after slapping teen Trump supporter during New Hampshire primary, police say**  
The Washington Post · 1 hour ago
- **New Hampshire man charged with slapping 15-year-old Trump supporter outside polling station**  
CNN · Yesterday
- **Antifa supporter charged with assaulting teen Trump fan**  
Washington Examiner · Yesterday

 [View Full Coverage](#)



# Put Your Skills to the Test

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# Put Your Skills to the Test

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# Democrats and Republicans disagree about Covid-19 facts, in a divide that goes beyond usual political partisanship

Our research found that Democrats and Republicans held genuine but different beliefs, not just about values or policies, but about basic facts.

By **ANDREA ROBBETT AND PETER HANS MATTHEWS**

Aug. 31, 2020, 8:39 a.m.



“A 2018 Pew Research Center survey indicates that Americans tend to label statements they agree with as factual and those they disagree with as opinion. A 2019 study by Ohio State University psychologists suggests that people do draw a distinction between dishonest and biased sources. The researchers found that even accurate news, when reported by a source considered biased, tends to lose its credibility.”

George M. Eberhart, “Media Literacy in an Age of Fake News”

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2019/11/01/media-literacy-in-an-age-of-fake-news/>

<https://www.journalism.org/2018/06/18/distinguishing-between-factual-and-opinion-statements-in-the-news/>

<https://news.osu.edu/is-that-news-really-fake-or-is-it-just-biased/>