*Media Matters for America*
http://mediamatters.org

*Media Matters for America* is a Web-based, not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) progressive research and information center dedicated to comprehensively monitoring, analyzing, and correcting conservative misinformation in the U.S. media.

**The News Literacy Project (NLP)**
http://www.thenewsliteracyproject.org/

The News Literacy Project (NLP) is a nonpartisan national education nonprofit that works with educators and journalists to teach middle school and high school students how to sort fact from fiction in the digital age. NLP provides these students with the essential skills they need to become smart, active consumers of news and information and engaged, informed citizens.

**Center for News Literacy**
http://www.centerfornewsliteracy.org/

News Literacy is a curriculum developed at Stony Brook University in New York over the past decade. It is designed to help students develop critical thinking skills in order to judge the reliability and credibility of information, whether it comes via print, television or the Internet. This is a particularly important skill in the Digital Age, as everyone struggles to deal with information overload and the difficulty in determining the authenticity of reports. In the Stony Brook model, students are taught to evaluate information primarily by analyzing news as well as new forms of information that are often mistaken for journalism.

**Snopes**
http://www.snopes.com/info/aboutus.asp

The snopes.com website was founded by David Mikkelson, who lives and works in the Los Angeles area. What he began in 1995 as an expression of his interest in researching urban legends has since grown into what is widely regarded by folklorists, journalists, and laypersons alike as one of the World Wide Web's essential resources. Snopes.com is routinely included in annual "Best of the Web" lists and has been the recipient of two Webby awards. The Mikkelsons have made multiple appearances as guests on national news programs such as 20/20, ABC World News, CNN Sunday Morning, and NPR's All Things Considered, and they and their work have been profiled in numerous major news publications, including The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and an April 2009 Reader’s Digest feature ("The Rumor Detectives") published as part of that magazine's "Your America: Inspiring People and Stories" series.

**Politifact**
http://www.politifact.com/

Politifact is a fact-checking website that rates the accuracy of claims by elected officials and others who speak up in American politics. Politifact is run by editors and reporters from the Tampa Bay Times, an independent newspaper in Florida, as is PunditFact, a site devoted to fact-checking pundits. The Politifact state sites are run by news organizations that have partnered with the Times. The state sites and PunditFact follow the same principles as the national site.
1. Big red flags for fake news: ALL CAPS, or obviously photoshopped pics.
2. A glut of pop-ups and banner ads? Good sign the story is pure clickbait.
3. Check the domain! Fake sites often add “.co” to trusted brands to steal their luster. (Think: “abcnews.com.co”)
4. If you land on an unknown site, check its “About” page. Then, Google it with the word “fake” and see what comes up.
5. If a story offers links, follow them. (Garbage leads to worse garbage.) No links, quotes, or references? Another telltale sign.
6. Verify an unlikely story by finding a reputable outlet reporting the same thing.
7. Check the date. Social media often resurrects outdated stories.
8. Read past headlines. Often they bear no resemblance to what lies beneath.
9. Photos may be misidentified and dated. Use a reverse image search engine like TinEye to see where an image really comes from.
10. Gut check. If a story makes you angry, it’s probably designed that way.
11. Finally, if you’re not sure it’s true, don’t share it! Don’t. Share. It.
# The Ultimate Cheatsheet for Critical Thinking

Want to exercise critical thinking skills? Ask these questions whenever you discover or discuss new information. These are broad and versatile questions that have limitless applications!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Why</th>
<th>How</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... benefits from this?</td>
<td>... are the strengths/weaknesses?</td>
<td>... would we see this in the real world?</td>
<td>... is this acceptable/unacceptable?</td>
<td>... is this a problem/challenge?</td>
<td>... is this similar to _____?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... is this harmful to?</td>
<td>... is another perspective?</td>
<td>... are there similar concepts/situations?</td>
<td>... would this benefit our society?</td>
<td>... is it relevant to me/others?</td>
<td>... does this disrupt things?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... makes decisions about this?</td>
<td>... is another alternative?</td>
<td>... is there the most need for this?</td>
<td>... would this cause a problem?</td>
<td>... is this the best/worst scenario?</td>
<td>... do we know the truth about this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... is most directly affected?</td>
<td>... would a counter-argument?</td>
<td>... in the world would this be a problem?</td>
<td>... is the best time to take action?</td>
<td>... are people influenced by this?</td>
<td>... will we approach this safely?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... have you also heard discuss this?</td>
<td>... is the best/worst case scenario?</td>
<td>... can we get more information?</td>
<td>... will we know we’ve succeeded?</td>
<td>... should people know about this?</td>
<td>... does this benefit us/others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... would be the best person to consult?</td>
<td>... is most/least important?</td>
<td>... do we go for help with this?</td>
<td>... has this played a part in our history?</td>
<td>... has it been this way for so long?</td>
<td>... does this harm us/others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... will be the key people in this?</td>
<td>... can we do to make a positive change?</td>
<td>... will this idea take us?</td>
<td>... can we expect this to change?</td>
<td>... have we allowed this to happen?</td>
<td>... do we see this in the future?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... deserves recognition for this?</td>
<td>... is getting in the way of our action?</td>
<td>... are the areas for improvement?</td>
<td>... should we ask for help with this?</td>
<td>... is there a need for this today?</td>
<td>... can we change this for our good?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[globaldigitalcitizen.org](http://globaldigitalcitizen.org)
CONSIDER THE SOURCE
Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.

READ BEYOND
Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What’s the whole story?

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

SUPPORTING SOURCES?
Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.

CHECK THE DATE
Reposting old news stories doesn’t mean they’re relevant to current events.

IS IT A JOKE?
If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.

CHECK YOUR BIASES
Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.

ASK THE EXPERTS
Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
With thanks to www.FactCheck.org
TEN QUESTIONS FOR NEWS DETECTION

Use the questions below to assess the likelihood that a piece of information is fake news. The more red flags you circle, the more skeptical you should be!

1. Gauge your emotional reaction:
   Is it strong? Are you angry? Are you intensely hoping that the information turns out to be true? False?

2. Reflect on how you encountered this. Was it promoted on a website? Did it show up in a social media feed? Was it sent to you by someone you know?

3. Consider the headline or main message:
   a. Does it use excessive punctuation(!) or ALL CAPS for emphasis? Yes | No
   b. Does it make a claim about containing a secret or telling you something that “the media” doesn’t want you to know? Yes | No
   c. Don’t stop at the headline! Keep exploring.

4. Is this information designed for easy sharing, like a meme?

5. Consider the source of the information:
   a. Is it a well-known source? Yes | No
   b. Is there a byline (an author’s name) attached to this piece? Yes | No
   c. Go to the website’s “About” section: Does the site describe itself as a “fantasy news” or “satirical news” site? Yes | No
   d. Does the person or organization that produced the information have any editorial standards? Yes | No
   e. Does the “contact us” section include an email address that matches the domain (not a Gmail or Yahoo email address)? Yes | No
   f. Does a quick search for the name of the website raise any suspicions? Yes | No

6. Does the example you’re evaluating have a current date on it?

7. Does the example cite a variety of sources, including official and expert sources? Does the information this example provides appear in reports from (other) news outlets?

8. Does the example hyperlink to other quality sources? In other words, they haven’t been altered or taken from another context?

9. Can you confirm, using a reverse image search, that any images in your example are authentic (in other words, sources that haven’t been altered or taken from another context)?

10. If you searched for this example on a fact-checking site such as Snopes.com, FactCheck.org or PolitiFact.com, is there a fact-check that labels it as less than true?

REMEMBER:
- It is easy to clone an existing website and create fake tweets to fool people.
- Bots are extremely active on social media and are designed to dominate conversations and spread propaganda.
- Fake news and other misinformation often use a real image from an unrelated event.
- Debunk examples of misinformation whenever you see them. It’s good for democracy!

Visit www.checkology.org for a comprehensive collection of news literacy e-learning experiences and other resources from NLP.