

FOUR MOVES & A HABIT

A Guide for Web Literacy and Fact Checking

This guide is intended to provide you with essential fact checking skills to help you determine the credibility and trustworthiness of information posted on the web. These skills are vital when performing web-based research and participating in a digital space.

The Moves

1. Check for Previous Work

Chances are someone has already done research or has “fact-checked” information published on the Internet. Thus, your first move should be to look around to see what previous research or fact-checking has already been done. These resources can include news coverage, reputable online sites (such as information from a government or educational website), or a fact-checking site such as [Politifact](#) or [Snopes](#). [Wikipedia](#) can also be a great place to start as well.

2. Go Upstream to the Source

It’s important to keep in mind that most of the content found on the web is not original. So, you will need to go “upstream” to the original source of the information to determine its trustworthiness. This can involve checking for embedded web links on a page or searching for the original information. For example, if the claim is an event that took place, try and find the news outlet where it was first reported; or if the claim is research based, try and find the journal in which it appeared.

3. Read Laterally

Once you have located the original source you may find that you still have questions about its trustworthiness. If this happens you will want to “read laterally” across other trustworthy sites to see what others have said about the author or publisher of the information. Remember, the truth is in the network.

4. Circle Back

Sometimes reading laterally will lead to a dead end or an increasingly confusing rabbit hole. If this happens circle back and start the process over again. Armed with the information you now know, you can begin your search with different search terms and a new search strategy.

The Habit

Check your Emotions

If the information you are reading gives you a strong emotional reaction, such as anger, frustration or validation take a step back and think about why this is. Sometimes controversial subjects or language can diminish our critical thinking and hamper our ability to fact-check. When this happens remember to slow down and use your moves.



Adapted from the book “Web Literacy for Student Fact-checkers,” By Michael A. Caulfield. Caulfield, M.A. (2017). Web Literacy for Student Fact-checkers. Retrieved from <https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com/>.