



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#235 - April 2025

A Best Practice: Evaluating Websites and Fact-Checking (Part III)

In our last two issues we explored various questions to explore in evaluating websites.

Another way to think about this challenge today is the importance of fact-checking. We are deluged with information constantly and from a wide variety of sources.

Some Questions to Ask

Listed here are **several sets of questions to ask and/or factors to consider**; some might be repetitive, but they provide various reminders about the importance of fact-checking. Pick and choose which one is most helpful for you. (Different people on staff or your adult faith formation committee might each use a different approach ... guaranteeing that all factors have been looked at.)

These ideas, too, would be good content for adult faith formation (in workshops, handouts, bulletin and website articles, etc.). How are we helping adults to be media literate, always searching for the truth?



1. Identify claims:
 - Determine the specific factual assertions that need to be verified.
2. Find primary sources:
 - Seek out original documents, data, or firsthand accounts rather than relying solely on secondary reporting.

3. Check multiple reliable sources:
 - Cross-reference information from various reputable outlets to corroborate facts.
4. Evaluate source credibility:
 - Consider the expertise, reputation, and potential biases of your sources.
5. Look for context:
 - Understand the full context surrounding a claim to avoid misinterpretation.
6. Be aware of common pitfalls:
 - Watch for logical fallacies, correlation vs. causation errors, and cherry-picked data.
7. Verify quotes and statistics:
 - Double-check the accuracy of quoted statements and numerical data.
8. Use fact-checking tools:
 - Utilize databases and resources specifically designed for fact-checking.
9. Contact experts:
 - Reach out to subject matter experts for clarification on complex topics.
10. Document your process:
 - Keep track of your sources and reasoning to support your conclusions.



HOW TO SPOT DISINFORMATION ONLINE

1. CONSIDER THE SOURCE.

Does the URL look strange? Check the 'About' page on the website.

2. CHECK THE DATE.

Is the story old news? Sharing out-of-date information may not match current events.

3. CROSS CHECK INFORMATION.

Are reputable news sources reporting the same story?

4. READ PAST THE HEADLINE.

What's the whole story? Sometimes a headline doesn't match the content.

5. QUESTION EMOTIONALLY CHARGED CONTENT.

Disinformation intends to sow division by getting us angry or sad through images or memes.



1. Check the source:
 - Verify the website's credibility and reputation.
2. Look for author information:
 - Credible articles usually have an identifiable author.
3. Check the date:
 - Ensure the information is current and relevant.

4. Cross-reference:
 - Compare the information with other reputable sources.
5. Be wary of sensational headlines:
 - They may not accurately reflect the content.
6. Check for citations:
 - Credible articles often link to primary sources.
7. Use fact-checking websites:
 - Sites like Snopes, FactCheck.org, or PolitiFact can help.
8. Beware of confirmation bias:
 - Seek out opposing viewpoints to challenge your beliefs.
9. Check for logical fallacies:
 - Be critical of arguments that don't follow sound reasoning.
10. Verify images:
 - Use reverse image search to check if photos have been manipulated or taken out of context.

POSITIVE FACT-CHECKING

#POSITIVELYPRESENT



1. ARE YOU 100% CERTAIN THIS INFORMATION COMES FROM A LEGITIMATE SOURCE?
2. DID YOU IDENTIFY & CHECK THE SOURCE? DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE FULL CONTEXT?
3. WHO BENEFITS FROM THIS INFORMATION BEING TRUE? (PERSON, COMPANY, ETC.)
4. DOES THIS INFORMATION CONTRADICT ALL OTHER FACTS OR SOURCES?
5. DO YOU WANT IT TO BE TRUE BECAUSE IT UPHOLDS WHAT YOU BELIEVE?
6. ARE YOUR BIASES & EMOTIONS IMPACTING HOW YOU SEE THIS INFORMATION?

GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED



Resources

Here are some reputable websites that provide information about fact-checking the news:

1. Snopes (snopes.com): One of the oldest and best-known fact-checking websites, covering a wide range of topics including news, politics, and viral claims.
2. PolitiFact (politifact.com): Focuses on fact-checking political statements and claims made by politicians, pundits, and social media.

3. FactCheck.org: A nonpartisan website that aims to reduce deception and confusion in U.S. politics by monitoring the factual accuracy of political statements.
4. Reuters Fact Check (reuters.com/fact-check): Provides fact-checks on various topics, including news stories, social media claims, and viral content.
5. AP Fact Check (apnews.com/hub/ap-fact-check): The Associated Press's fact-checking initiative, which examines claims made in the news and by public figures.
6. Media Bias/Fact Check (mediabiasfactcheck.com): Provides ratings on media sources' political bias and factual accuracy.
7. AllSides (allsides.com): Offers news from multiple political perspectives and rates media outlets for bias.
8. First Draft (firstdraftnews.org): Provides resources and training for journalists and the public on how to verify online information.
9. Snopes' Field Guide to Fake News Sites :
(snopes.com/news/2016/01/14/fake-news-sites/)



These websites can help us learn about fact-checking techniques and stay informed about the accuracy of news stories and claims circulating in the media.

- <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-fact-check>
- <https://www.factcheck.org/>

GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

- <https://www.opensecrets.org/>
- <https://www.verifythis.com>
- <https://leadstories.com/>
- <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/>
- <https://www.reuters.com/fact-check/>
- <https://www.poynter.org/news/fact-checking/>
- <https://www.snopes.com/>
- <https://www.politifact.com>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/fact-checker/>
- <https://www.allsides.com/unbiased-balanced-news>
- <https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/evaluating-resources>
- https://guides.library.cornell.edu/critically_analyzing
- <https://credibility.stanford.edu/>
- https://mediaspecialistsguide.blogspot.com/2020/08/10-non-partisan-fact-checking-websites.html?fbclid=IwAR3_lg-BUfH-cgRbPFPQG5WHG5qsxmyGIfChlCLSUGX3izAtoHpsVaaxu8
- https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_prepare_kids_for_misinformation_online?utm

TOP 5 FACT-CHECKING RESOURCES

The search for factual information is endless in the digital age. Here are five fact-checking resources we rely on to help us tackle rumors and misinformation.



SNOPES
Snopes.com investigates all types of information online, including urban legends, myths and rumors.

POLITIFACT
PolitiFact uses the Truth-O-Meter™ to evaluate statements made by elected officials, political candidates, activists and more.

FACTCHECK.ORG
Factcheck.org seeks to combine aspects of both journalism and scholarship to provide accurate information to media consumers.

AMERICAN PRESS INSTITUTE
The American Press Institute's new project provides vetted resources for fact-checkers and journalists.

WASHINGTON POST FACT CHECKER
Journalist Glenn Kessler responds to questions from the public and rates statements on a scale of one to four "Pinocchio's."

Check your Facts

Tired of over the top claims and misinformation? Follow these basic steps to sort the facts from fiction.



Check Credentials

Who is the information coming from? Is the author qualified to discuss the field the article is about? Do they work in that field or have other credentials that give them authority on that subject? Do a quick Google search or check LinkedIn to see if the author has the education and/or experience to be considered a trusted and viable source.



Check the Dates

Information can have an expiration date. Is the article current? Have recent events made the information in the article irrelevant? Some news might not be fake so much as it is outdated. Try to find the most up to date information possible.



Judge for Yourself

Do your research. Look at all of the information objectively, sort out the facts from the opinions, and make your own judgment.



Check for Bias

Does the article seem overly supportive of a particular point of view? For many fake news articles, it's easy to spot their bias, but for others it's more subtle. Look at the images and language the articles uses. Does it skew to the right or the left? You might not be getting the whole story.



Check the Source

Does the article cite any sources? Don't blindly trust the source, check them out as well. That impressively named association might be have their own bias or hidden agenda. Just as you checked the author's credentials, check the source's as well. If there are no sources, do more research on the topic to see if existing information agrees with the article or not.



Information adapted from Indiana University, East

<https://library.alamancecc.edu/fake/analyzing>



Janet Schaeffler, OP
www.janetschaeffler.com
jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org

Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *Guided by the Directory for Catechesis: Transforming the Vision and Practice of Parish Catechesis*
<https://twentythirdpublications.com/products/guided-by-the-directory-for-catechesis>
- Lifelong Faith Training: <https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/>
- Lifelong Faith: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/>
- Seasons of Adult Faith website: <http://adultfaith.weebly.com/>
- The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation:
https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons_of_aff_-_journal_special_issue.pdf