

# The Process of Establishing Integrity: Quick Checklist<sup>1</sup>

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(Revised September, 2020)

*Information integrity, integrity of information* - The state that exists when information is unchanged from its source and has not been accidentally or intentionally modified, altered, or destroyed.<sup>2</sup> *Veracity, veracity of information* - In ethics, truthfulness or honesty in communication.<sup>5</sup>

## The Checklist

### Authority

- An editor or editorial board listed?
- Any ads?<sup>3</sup> Or are ads disguised?<sup>4</sup>
- Any code of ethics present for the organization or group?
- Any conflict of interest stated?
- Any disclosure statements available?
- Biographical information present? Any credentials, expertise, and/or affiliations listed?
- Branding or a logo present on the site and/or source?
- If a Web site or blog, what is the domain name (e.g., .gov, .org, .info, .com, [country](#), .tv)?<sup>5</sup>
- If a Web site, blog, or other source (e.g., YouTube), is there an "About Us" section?
- [Who created](#) or authored the material?

### Copyright

- Copyright restrictions or Creative Commons license stated on the site?

### Design and Usability

- If a blog or Web site, is there clear architecture, navigability, and design?
- Is the date of the material listed? Is the content current or legacy?

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1 This checklist grew out of a course I teach, INFO 281 Integrity of Information, iSchool, San Jose State; Also adapted and expanded from Stony Brook's Center for New Literacy Project, <http://www.centerfornewsliteracy.org> and Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's *Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010).

2 Center for Development of Security Excellence. *Glossary of Security Terms and Definitions*. U.S. Department of Defense, November 2012. [https://archive.org/details/cdse\\_Glossary\\_Handbook/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/cdse_Glossary_Handbook/mode/2up)

3 See the *Stanford Guidelines for Web Credibility*, <https://credibility.stanford.edu/guidelines/>

4 From Google's *Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines*, <https://static.googleusercontent.com/media/www.google.com/en//insidesearch/howsearchworks/assets/searchqualityevaluatorguidelines.pdf>

5 See Nathaniel Tombs and Eleonore Fournier-Tombs, "Ambiguity in Authenticity of Top-level Coronavirus-related Domains," *Misinformation Review* August 31, 2020, <https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/ambiguity-in-authenticity-of-top-level-coronavirus-related-domains>. The researchers, in a study of 303 Web sites, found "misleading information was disseminated under top-level coronavirus-related domain names."

### **Fact-checking**

- If the information, including photos and memes, is posted, shared, or retweeted, is there an attempt by the sender to [fact-check](#), track down source(s), and validate claims?
- Is an explanation of fact-checking methods and/or trust indicators provided by the fact-checker?
- Who are the individuals and organizations behind fact-checking? Their affiliations, funding, politics, and reputation?

### **The Message**

- Any specialized, technical language used? Doublespeak?<sup>6</sup> Use of metaphors?<sup>7</sup>
- Can you determine perspective (e.g. I know, I believe, first person, opinion)?
- Does the language appeal to the mind or emotions?<sup>8,9</sup> Does the headline of the article or post support the main point(s) in the text?
- If the appeal is to emotions, are “loaded” words or terms used? That is, language that may trigger an emotional response?
- Is there conflation or any (logical) [fallacies](#) that can be identified within the piece?
- Who and what isn't included in the material? In other words, *what is missing*?
- What conclusions, claims, assumptions, and alternative explanations are made in the piece?
- What evidence is given to support main points?
- Who is quoted? Spokespeople within organizations or industry? “Government officials”? Anonymous sources?
- Finally, are Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How addressed in the post and/or article?

<b>Citing, Grammar, &amp; Style</b>	<b>Methods</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any peer-reviewed sources cited in-text and/or in a ref/bib section?</li><li>• Any references linked in-text and in a distinct ref/bib section?</li><li>• Correct grammar and spelling?</li><li>• Sources cited correctly using a manual of style (e.g., <i>APA</i>, <i>Chicago</i>)?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Any <a href="#">guidelines</a> available that outline research practices used?</li><li>• Any statistics or graphics (e.g., charts) used? Where are they derived? How are they interpreted?</li><li>• What methods, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed are utilized?</li><li>• Reliance on anonymous sources?</li></ul>

6 Doublespeak “is language that avoids or shifts responsibility” (Lutz 1981, 1). There are four types of doublespeak: *euphemism, jargon, bureaucratism, and inflation* (William Lutz, [Doublespeak](#), New York: HarperCollins, 1981).

7 Metaphors have the power “to define reality” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 157). See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, [Metaphors We Live By](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980, 156-159).

8 From *Information is Beautiful*, <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/rhetological-fallacies/>

9 See “How to Detect Propaganda,” In Institute for Propaganda Analysis, *Propaganda Analysis: Volume I of the Publications of the Institute for Propaganda Analysis* (New York, Institute for Propaganda Analysis, Inc 1938, 5-8), <https://archive.org/details/IPAVol1>