

FIGHT THE FAKE

5 Fact-checking Tips from BRITANNICA

At a time when false news spreads faster than the truth, checking your facts is essential. Here are some tips from a 250-year-old information gatherer about how to navigate truth.

1

Choose your sources wisely.

Some types of sources are better than others. Search out those that thoroughly review information before publishing it. Try to track down primary or authoritative voices, like scholarly journals or government databases, rather than second-hand reports.

2

Proceed with caution.

Be skeptical of superlatives, generalizations, and anything that seems too good to be true. Consider the author's motivation. Does the source have a neutral point of view, or is there an agenda behind the information.

3

Trust expertise.

When in doubt about a source, check the author's qualifications. Determine how well he or she knows the subject.

4

Expand your search.

Don't settle for a single source if you can find two or more. Look for consensus, but be wary of echo chambers. Cast a wide net. In addition to simple web searches, try databases like Google Books.

5

Understand the context.

Few facts exist outside of a broader narrative. Read around the fact to see how it fits into the big picture.

