

The Process of Establishing Integrity: Quick Checklist¹

INFO 281-14 Integrity of Information

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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.² *Veracity, veracity of information* – In ethics, truthfulness or honesty in communication.

The Checklist

Authority

- If a Web site or blog, what is the domain name (e.g., .gov, .org, .info, .com, [country](#), .tv)?
- Branding or a logo present?
- If a Web site, blog, or source (e.g., YouTube) is there an “About Us” section?
- [Who created](#) or authored the material?
- Biographical information present? Any credentials, expertise, and/or affiliations listed?
- An editor or editorial board listed?
- Any disclosure statements available?
- Any code of ethics present for the organization or group?

Design and Usability

- If a Web site, is there clear architecture, navigability, and design?
- Is correct spelling and grammar used?
- Any ads?³ Or are ads disguised?⁴
- Is the date of the material available? Is the content current or legacy?
- Copyright stated?

1 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. Retrieved from http://www.cdse.edu/documents/cdse/Glossary_Handbook.pdf

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>

The Message

- Does the headline of the article or post support the main point(s) in the text?
- Can you determine perspective (e.g. I know, I believe, first person, opinion)?
- Any specialized, technical language used? Doublespeak?⁵ Use of metaphors?⁶ Does the language appeal to the mind or emotions?^{7, 8}
- If the appeal is to emotions, are “loaded” words or terms used? That is, terms that may trigger an emotional response?
- Is there conflation or any (logical) [fallacies](#) that can be identified within the piece?
- What evidence is given to support main points?
- Who is quoted? Spokespeople within organizations or industry? “Government officials”? Anonymous sources? What are their credentials?
- 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?
- Finally, are Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How addressed?

Grammar, Citing, & Style

- Correct grammar and spelling?
- Any peer-reviewed sources cited in-text and/or in a distinct ref/bib section?
- Any references linked in-text and in a distinct ref/bib section?
- Are the materials cited correctly using a manual of style (e.g., *APA*, *Chicago*)?

Methods

- Any statistics used? Where are they derived? How are they interpreted?
- What methods, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed, are utilized?
- Any [guidelines](#) available that outline research practices?

If the information is shared, reposted, or tweeted, was there an attempt by the original sender to fact-check, track down source(s), and validate claims?

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

6 See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 156–159. Metaphors have the power “to define reality” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 157).

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

8 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>