

The Process of Establishing Integrity: Quick Checklist¹

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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.⁵

The Checklist

Authority

- An editor or editorial board listed?
- Any ads?³ Or are ads disguised?⁴
- 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)?⁵
- 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?

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

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?⁶ Use of metaphors?⁷
- Can you determine perspective (e.g. I know, I believe, first person, opinion)?
- Does the language appeal to the mind or emotions?^{8,9} 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?

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

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>