



BE MEDIA SMART

STOP | THINK | CHECK

**BUILDING STRATEGIES:
ANALYSE MEDIA CONTENT & INFORMATION**

**MEDIA
LITERACY
IRELAND**



**EDMO
Ireland**

BUILDING STRATEGIES TO ANALYSE MEDIA CONTENT AND INFORMATION

1. LATERAL READING

Lateral reading is a fact-checking strategy used primarily to assess the credibility of online information. The concept developed from research conducted by the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), and it is now widely used by fact-checkers.

The idea is quite simple: instead of deeply analysing the content on a page, article, or post (vertical reading), individuals leave the page to see what others say about the source or the content, opening new tabs or windows to search for reliable external evidence or perspectives. This approach encourages people to investigate the reputation of the source and the validity of the content by comparing it with other available resources.



Lateral reading helps you determine the source reliability, intention and biases by searching for content on the same topic in other sources, especially authoritative ones, such as research centres, universities, reputable news sources and fact-checkers, so that you can check how they cover it.

If you are checking the credibility of an author or expert, for example, you can check other articles written by them, or check if their qualifications are real by looking at current and previous institutions where they worked.

Some questions for lateral reading include:

- Who owns or sponsors the platform where the original content was published?
- What do other authoritative sources have to say about the source, the author or the content published?
- Is the content supported by credible experts or institutions in the field?
- Are reliable news sources reporting on the same topic?
- Has the information been fact-checked by reliable platforms?
- Does what you find in other sources support the original content?



- What is the publication date, and does it matter for the context?

If you find enough information in reliable and respected sources confirming the content of the original story, you will feel more confident about its credibility.

2. NEWS SOURCE EVALUATION

How can you know if a news source is reliable? The following steps can help you with this assessment.

- Assess** the news coverage and different sections of the publication. Ideally, go through different articles and news stories to check their quality and standards. Reputable sources will not only provide commentary and opinion about current affairs, for example. They will invest in professional journalists who will provide original reporting.
- Use lateral reading** to learn more about the news source. Use a search engine to check what other sources say about the publication. For example, you can check if the source has a record



of publishing false or misleading content; if it is owned or funded by unreliable people, groups or governments; or if it is a satirical publication.

- C. Check if the source** adheres to journalistic standards, such as independence (no conflict of interest), fairness (no partiality or bias), accountability (acknowledging and correcting mistakes), balance (checking multiple perspectives), transparency (clear information about ownership, who produces the content etc.), and accuracy (verifying facts before publishing them).
- D. Analyse the language.** Reputable news sources will avoid informal language, will rarely contain grammatical or spelling errors, and will not use discriminatory words or expressions. Also, the use of sensational or exaggerated language, especially on headlines to catch people's attention (the so-called clickbait), should not be expected in respected news sources.



3. IMAGES AND VIDEOS VERIFICATION

To assess the legitimacy and validity of images, you can examine the image for visual inconsistencies in shadows, reflections, lighting, perspective, and proportions. Manipulated images may exhibit subtle mistakes in these areas. Be particularly suspicious of photos that contain text (such as someone holding a poster or a sign, for example), as it is very easy to add or change text within the image.

You can also observe the context in which the image is used to see if it aligns with the events or situations it is supposed to depict. And, of course, consider where the image was found and the reliability of the source.

In videos, detecting manipulation can be difficult due to the improvement of deepfake technology and other sophisticated editing tools. However, just like with images, you can look for inconsistencies in the video, such as irregular lighting, shadows, and facial expressions.

Also, you should pay attention to the audio: mismatches in voice and accent can indicate that the content has been manipulated.



Reverse Image Search

One of the most used tools by fact-checkers to investigate images online is called reverse image search. Using platforms such as Google or TinEye, you can use this tool to help you find the origin of an image or where it has been used online.

Possible search results may include similar images, websites or social media posts that include the image, and other sizes of the image. The tool can also identify modified versions of the original image.

How It works:

- You upload an image or provide an image's URL.
- The search engine analyses various elements of the image, such as colours, textures, shapes, and patterns.
- Based on these features, the search engine scans its database to find similar or identical images, providing a list of results where the image or similar ones appear online.
- Each result will typically include links to the pages where the images are found, which may also provide context or additional information about the images.



A guide for reverse image search from Snopes, a fact-checking platform:

- <https://www.snopes.com/articles/400681/how-to-perform-reverse-image-searches/>

This video from Crash Course discuss how we should evaluate photos and videos.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7uvqb8fcdA&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtN07XYqqWSKpPrtNDiCHTzU&index=8>

LEARN MORE

Do you want to learn more about media literacy and improve your knowledge and skills to tackle the disinformation problem?

Check out the resources on the Media Literacy Ireland website:

<https://www.medialiteracyireland.ie/training-development/>

You can filter the resources by topic, age, format, and purpose to find reports, news articles, lesson plans, videos, online games, quizzes, websites and many more.

