IS THIS STORY SHARE-WORTHY?

The First Amendment protects the right to report and publish information, but not every story is worth your text, tweet or share. This chart can help you find the good stuff and get rid of the garbage.

NEED HELP?

IS IT REAL?
Does the EVIDENCE hold up? Is the SOURCE legitimate? Run a search for the source name and key facts, people or images from the story to weed out the fakes.

IS IT WELL-MADE?
Are you impressed by the EXECUTION? A well-made story starts with solid facts. It should be calm, clear and neat, not a train wreck of exaggerated emotion (like ALL CAPS WORDS!!!!) and sloppy mistakes.

IS IT NEWS OR OPINION?
What is the PURPOSE? News mainly explains what is happening. Opinion takes a stance to judge or make an argument about it. First-person voice or words like “perspective” and “editorial” are often tip-offs it is opinion.

IS IT SUPPORTED BY FACTS?
Is there good EVIDENCE? Look for statistics, studies, historical examples, primary sources, expert analysis or other signs that the writer has done their homework and can back up their argument.

IS IT BIASED?
Does the EVIDENCE show you the big picture? Biased stories may leave out key facts, so you only see one side of an issue. They may also exaggerate or downplay the importance of the story in the CONTEXT of other news.

IS THE BIAS OPEN OR SNEAKY?
Does the EXECUTION clearly aim for a specific AUDIENCE? News with an open bias often uses partisan labels in its titles (like “Left-Wing News”) or declares support for partisan missions (like “help Republicans get elected”). News with a sneaky bias pretends it isn’t biased at all.

IS IT ENTERTAIN AND/OR RAISE AWARENESS?
What is this story’s PURPOSE? Weigh whether the story was created for darker reasons, like causing destruction, scamming people for profit, or unfairly hurting someone or something.

Is it real, solid information. It may not be all sunshine and rainbows, and you may not like what it has to say, but it’s backed up with facts to provide plenty of food for thought. It doesn’t have the shock value of a crazy fake news story or the viral potential of an angry rant, but what it lacks in sizzle it makes up for with reliability and real-world implications.

DEFINITELY SHARE-WORTHY

MAYBE SHARE-WORTHY

PROBABLY NOT SHARE-WORTHY

Is it open or sneaky? News should be open. Sneaky news is designed to put its readers in a certain headspace, much like a political ad.

Is it supported by facts? Make sure that the claim is supported by facts, not just opinions or personal beliefs.

Is it biased? Biased news often has a specific agenda, like pushing a certain political ideology or promoting a particular cause.

Is it real? Check the facts and sources to make sure the information is accurate and reliable.

Is it well-made? A well-made story is clear, concise, and free of errors.

Is it news or opinion? News reports on events, while opinion articles express the writer’s personal views.

Is it entertaining and/or raising awareness? Consider whether the story is designed to entertain or inform the reader, or whether it’s trying to raise awareness of a particular issue.

Find more media literacy resources at NewseumED.org