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.

IS IT REAL?
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 tipoffs it is opinion.

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 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 NEWS OR OPINION?
Start Here

IS IT WELL-MADE?
YES
NO

IS THE BIAS OPEN OR SNEAKY?
OPEN
SNEAKY

IS IT NEWS OR OPINION?
NEWS
OPINION

IS IT BIASED?
YES
NO

IS IT SUPPORTED BY FACTS?
YES
NO

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YES
NO

IS IT WELL-MADE?
YES
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IS THE BIAS OPEN OR SNEAKY?
OPEN
SNEAKY

DEFINITELY SHARE-WORTHY
This is 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 sparkle and distractions it makes up for with reliability and real-world implications.

MAYBE SHARE-WORTHY
It all depends on how you do it. These stories can be perfect for getting insight into how other people think or starting a productive debate, but only if you stay aware of the risks. Take a minute to foresee the possible consequences of your actions and choose your words wisely to steer clear of troll bait or flame wars. Look for a way to stir the pot without making it boil over.

PROBABLY NOT SHARE-WORTHY
Marred by hidden agendas and bad intentions, these stories can fuel destruction and chaos. With no concern for consequences, they can spread deceit, fear and sometimes even danger. From scamming the system for profit to tricking people into bad decisions to just plain making folks look stupid, there’s something tricky going on here.

DOES IT ENTERTAIN AND/OR RAISE AWARENESS?
YES
NO

IS THIS STORY SHARE-WORTHY?

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.

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