

GUIDELINES FOR DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN “FAKE NEWS” AND REAL NEWS

- **(Does the) URL look odd?** If so, it’s probably a phony news site. Click the “about” link and see if it leads to a credible source.
- **Does it make you mad?** False reports often target emotions.
- **If it’s real, other news sites are likely reporting it.** If not, it may not be real.
- **How is the writing?** Real news writing is punctuated properly.
- **Who are the writers and the people in the story?** Google them and find out.
- **What are fact-checking sites like Snopes.com and FactCheck.org finding?** Check it out.
- **It might be satire.** Is the site, or the writer, satirical or just stating opinions?
- **Think twice before sharing.**

Source: Carolyn Thompson, The Associated Press

FIVE STEPS TO A GOOD DECISION

When You Must Make a Crucial Decision:

1. Be aware of your emotions. Your emotional state has an influence on how you perceive truth.
2. Be aware of your assumptions. You can mistake assumptions for facts.
3. Sort out fact from fiction. Create a checklist of questions to ask to filter out fiction.
4. Arrive at a conclusion, make a decision.
5. Create a plan for implementing that decision – plan each step of the way

TIPS ON HOW TO HAVE A CIVIL AND PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATION

- Avoid loaded words (“reform,” “illegals,” etc.), slurs and name-calling
- Don’t make it personal: talk about issues and ideas, not people
- Avoid “you” statements
- Be informed and specific – focus on facts, not emotions
- Be inquisitive and show interest through positive body language
- Think before you talk and choose your words carefully
- Listen...really listen
- Avoid saying “we can just agree to disagree” – which blocks further discussion – instead, focus on areas of agreement and build on them
- Ask open-ended questions such as “WHY?” and “HOW?”
- Admit if you are wrong or do not know
- Be sincere
- Be respectful of the other person’s sensitivities
- Don’t ridicule or try to change the other person’s values
- Use non-threatening tone of voice and gestures; respect physical space
- Conversation is not a zero-sum game: seek common ground, not individual victory
- Focus on solving problems and reaching consensus
- Remember that controversy and conflict can be productive

Source: Dick Pryor General Manager, KGOU Radio

20 QUESTIONS: FINDING A NEWS SOURCE YOU CAN TRUST

When evaluating a source of news and information, professionalism, ethics, accuracy, reliability, transparency, fairness, objectivity and honesty matter. Use these twenty questions (in no particular order) as a guide when determining trustworthiness.

- **How long has the news entity been in business?** Organizations that have stood the test of time are more likely to be reliable.
- **Who is their audience?** In my opinion, organizations that are intended to appeal to broad audiences are generally more likely to be fair than those targeting specific audiences and appealing to special interests.
- **Do they belong to a professional association?** Trustworthy news organizations typically do.
- **Do they subscribe to and operate under a code of ethics?** Professional news organizations and reporters are up-front about their commitment to ethics, and take it seriously. Real journalists commonly adhere to codes of ethics from the Society of Professional Journalists, Radio Television Digital News Association and ethical standards developed by their own governing organizations and professional membership associations.
- **What do they do when their reporters make a mistake?** Professional news organizations promptly retract or correct mistakes and discipline reporters and editors who make egregious or consistent mistakes and violate rules of ethics.
- **Do their stories use multiple sources?** Use of anonymous sources is not unprofessional. In fact, it is often the only way stories can be developed. But, trustworthy news organizations go to great lengths to confirm facts and statements through multiple sources. Their stories will prove that dedication.
- **Are photos identified and attributed?** Proper identification of people in photos and disclosure of the source of images are critical to providing accuracy and context.
- **Do they disclose their parent organization and/or governing board?** Transparency illustrates values that guide editorial decision-making. "Reporting" supported by advocacy groups and political special interests (or undisclosed groups) is less likely to be accurate, fair and trustworthy.
- **Do they employ professional journalists with relevant newsgathering, editing and presentation experience?** Trustworthy news organizations are more likely to hire journalists and commentators with appropriate education, skills and work experience.
- **Do they produce "news" or "opinion"? Do they label opinion?** Blurring news and opinion confuses news consumers. Part of a journalist's job is to interpret facts, but trustworthy organizations try to be clear about when their journalists are providing their own personal opinion, commentary or opinions of others.
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- **Are they advocates for causes, issues, candidates or parties?** Trustworthy news organizations and reporters avoid conflicts of interest. Ethics codes are clear about the necessity of professional journalists to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may lead to bias.
- **Do they have access to newsmakers, thought leaders and government decision makers?** If so, that suggests important news sources view them as credible and trustworthy. Access reinforces journalists' professional status.
- **Do they use "loaded" words?** Pay attention to the words news sources use. Journalists who are not commentators, analysts or opinion writers take great pains to avoid loaded words that suggest advocacy for a position or inflame emotions.
- **Do they brand themselves as a professional organization?** Mission statements and core values suggest a news entity supports the search for truth and practice of journalistic integrity.
- **Do they have a "real" office?** Even in today's virtual workplace world, news organizations that can be trusted have a public-facing office and can easily be contacted. Fair, public service minded organizations encourage citizen input and feedback and are responsive to criticism.
- **Do they provide a forum for competing viewpoints?** News organizations that can be trusted provide an opportunity for differing opinions on matters of public interest. Stacking the deck in quality or quantity suggests bias and an editorial agenda.
- **Over time, do they seem to operate ethically and fairly?** Consistent quality and professionalism matters and should be judged over an extended period of time, rather than through a brief "snapshot."
- **Do other journalists view them as "journalists"?** Journalists are a picky bunch. If they shun a reporter or an organization, take note.
- **Do they enter and receive awards in professional competitions?** Real news organizations and reporters do this. See above.
- **Is their "interpretative reporting" supported by commonly accepted facts and/or professionally obtained information?** This one requires some work on the part of news consumers. Check out sources listed (or linked) and whether other news organizations are reporting similar stories. Lack of attributed sources, use of questionable data and failure of other organizations to develop or repeat the story suggests it may not be credible.

Source: Dick Pryor General Manager, KGOU Radio