Criteria for Evaluating Sources[1]

Step 1: Analyze the website title and domain.

- Odd domain names generally equal rarely truthful news. However, remember that foreign news organizations may have country-specific domains.
- Websites which end in "lo" (e.g., Newslo) typically repackage accurate information with false or misleading information for comedy or satire. Websites which end in ".com.co" are often fake versions of real news sources.
- Words like ".wordpress" or "blogger" in the domain usually signify it is a personal blog rather than a news source.

Step 2: Analyze the "About Us" (or similar) section.

- A total lack of "About Us," "Contact us," or author attribution may mean that the source or website is not a legitimate source of information.
- Use http://whois.domaintools.com/ to look up the domain owner.
- Google the title, domain name, and/or anyone listed in the "About Us" section to see any credibility checkers have previously reported on the source or website (e.g., Hoax-Slayer, Snopes, FactCheck.org, Fact Checker (Washington Post)).
- Review the source's "Legal" or "Disclaimer" section (if applicable). Many satirical websites disclose this information in those sections.

Step 3: Analyze what you're reading.

- Identify what type of writing you are reading. Is it news reporting? A feature story? An editorial or work by a guest blogger? A review? An op-ed or a disguised ad? A comment?
- Even if you are on a traditional, reputable source or website, you might be reading a blog entry or comment, which are typically not checked as closely for accuracy or credibility.
- Triangulate or corroborate the information with multiple sources. Verify the information is being shared by multiple sources/sites, particularly by known, reputable sites and identify any discrepancies in information.
- Go back to the story again and again. Breaking news will continue to break. Early reports are built from limited information so you'll want to watch a story grow into a fuller picture.

Step 4: Analyze the source's sources.

- If the website mentions or links to another source or study, look it up.
- Rule out hoaxes by looking up the story in credibility checkers (e.g., Hoax-Slayer, Snopes, FactCheck.org, Fact Checker (Washington Post)).
- If the information passes the hoax test, determine if the source/study being accurately reflected and reported? Are officials being cited? Can you confirm their quotations in other sources?

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[1] From "False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and Satirical 'News Sources" by Melissa Zimdars, which is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0.

Step 5: Analyze the style.

- Determine whether the source or website has a consistent style (e.g., spacing, font size, citations), correct spelling and grammar, and an aesthetically pleasing look (e.g., well-used images and logos, consistent and complementary colors)
- Take note of sources or websites that use exaggerated and provocative headlines and frequently use ALL CAPS in headlines and/or body text (e.g., WOW! SLAUGHTER! DESTROY!). This stylistic practice and these types of hyperbolic word choices are often used to create emotional responses with readers that is avoided in more traditional styles of journalism.
- If the source or website is sensational (e.g., too unbelievable to be true) and/or makes you REALLY ANGRY, keep reading about the topic via other sources to make sure the story you read wasn't purposefully trying to engage you emotionally with misleading or false information in order to generate shares and ad revenue.
- Be careful with photographs. Images can be easily manipulated. Do a Google reverse image search to see if you can discover the source of an image and its possible variations.

Additional Resources

- "Breaking News Consumer's Handbooks" by NPR from Stony Brook Center for News Literacy <http://drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org/resource/npr-s-breaking-news-consumers-handbooks-0>
- CRAAP (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, Purpose) Test posted by the Meriam Library, California State University, Chico <http://www.csuchico.edu/lins/handouts/eval_websites.pdf>
- "Evaluating Sources: Using the RADAR Framework" by J. Mandalios from the William H. Hannon Library at Loyola Marymount University <http://libguides.lmu.edu/aboutRADAR>
- "Truth, Truthiness, Triangulation: A News Literacy Toolkit for a 'Post-Truth' World" by Joyce Valenza from *School Library Journal* <http://blogs.slj.com/neverendingsearch/2016/11/26/truth-truthiness-triangulation-and-the-librarian-way-a-news-literacy-toolkit-for-a-post-truth-world/>
- Digital Resource Center: Center for News Literacy by Stony Brook Center for News Literacy from Stony Brook University <http://drc.centerfornewsliteracy.org/>
- Free curriculum at Global OnRamp from the Center for Media Literacy <http://store.media-values.com/freeonrampproducts.aspx>
- Free news and media literacy lessons and curricula from SchoolJournalism.org <http://www.schooljournalism.org/model-news-literacy-curriculum/>