FACT-CHECKING TOOL KIT — A resource for the Community Integration Network

In this digital age, it's important that we think critically about the information that we see online.

Social media platforms, for instance, have become a major source of news but the algorithms that drive them were designed to maximize engagement.

The algorithms show us sensational content that plays on our emotions to keep us engaged as long as possible while the platforms sell ads and collect data about us. This also happens on some online websites.

This has the effect of giving false and misleading information a head start making it increasingly difficult to sort fact from fiction online.

Understanding the role of algorithms in curating online content and the connection between our information environment and democracy is key to developing critical thinking skills in the digital age.

Furthermore, our digital ecosystem is polluted with mis – and disinformation. That is to say, false and misleading information such as conspiracy theories, hoaxes, memes, even images and videos taken out of context.

This fact-checking tool kit includes 1) tips to verify claims, sources, images and videos online, 2) a list of trusted sources to go to for fact-checks and 3) additional verification and digital literacy sources. But first:

WHAT IS MIS – AND DISINFORMATION?

Misinformation is information that is unintentionally false and misleading, and spread unknowingly. *An example of this is when family and friends send us information that is intended to warn us about something they think is important but it is, in fact, not true.*

Disinformation is information that is deliberately false and misleading, and spread for political gain, to profit or to discredit. *This is not always known right away and will often take journalists, fact-checkers, and/or researchers some time to investigate.*

Source: https://mediamanipulation.org/definitions

PART I – 5 TIPS TO VERIFY CONTENT ONLINE

TIP #1 – CHECK THE SOURCE

When you come across new information online or a piece of content that was shared with you, the first thing to do is to pause and check to see if it's true.

Ask yourself who produced this content and why? Is it to inform, profit, discredit, entertain, or deceive?

Open your web browser and do a search for the source. What does the internet tell you about the source? If it's a person, what is their expertise? Their affiliations? If the source is a study, has it been peer-reviewed? What does a Wikipedia search say about the source?

Try to find two or more results that speak to the reputation and credibility of the source.

Beware of false experts such as celebrities and social media influencers with no expertise on the topic they are speaking about, or celebrity health experts trying to sell you miracle cures and other products. These are often marketing ploys.

If there is no source credited for the information or content that you are looking at, that is a good reason not to share it until you are able to find out a bit more information.

TIP #2 – CHECK THE CLAIM

What is the claim or statement that is being made in the text, image or video that you are looking at? Read past the headline to find out.

Open your web browser and do a search for that claim using keywords. Start with the most important words in the claim. You can also type "fact check" followed by the claim. This will tell you if other journalists or fact-checkers have already verified the information online.

The point of this search is to find out how other sources are reporting on the claim. What does your local news say? Are local or international fact-checkers reporting on the claim? If it's a science-related story (COVID-19, climate change, etc.) what does

scientific consensus say about the claim in question? Check with your public health agencies too.

Again, try to find two or more results that speak to the validity of the claim. During "breaking news," you may want to wait until more information is available before sharing the content before you.

TIP #3 – CHECK THE IMAGE: DO A REVERSE IMAGE SEARCH

Images are easily manipulated and taking real images or videos out of context is a very popular form of disinformation. The good news is that it is possible to trace the origins of an image by doing a Reverse Image Search.

HERE ARE FOUR REVERSE IMAGE SEARCH PLATFORMS that you can use to find the origins of an image published online:

- **Google:** https://images.google.com

- **Bing:** https://www.bing.com

- **TinEye:** https://tineye.com

- **Yandex:** https://yandex.com

The steps to verify and image are slightly different depending on what web browser you are using.

OPTION A – FOR GOOGLE CHROME, SELECT AN IMAGE ONLINE AND FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

STEP1: Right-click on the image;

STEP 2: Select "Search Google for image";

STEP 3: Review the results.

Where and when was the image published and in what context? If you don't recognize the name of the source where it was published, use Tip #1 to CHECK THE SOURCE.

OPTION B – FOR INTERNET EXPLORER, MOZILLA FIREFOX, SAFARI, ETC., SELECT AN IMAGE ONLINE AND FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

STEP1: Right-click on the image;

STEP 2: Select "Copy image address" or "Copy image." You can also save the image to your computer, if you prefer.

STEP 3: Go to Google Images: https://images.google.com and click on the camera icon for "Search by image";

STEP 4: Then "Paste image URL" or if you saved the image then click, "Upload an image." The keyboard shortcut for Paste is *Ctrl+V* for Windows and *Command+V* for Apple computers.

STEP 5: Review the results.

Where and when was the image published and in what context? If you don't recognize the name of the source where it was published, use Tip #1 to CHECK THE SOURCE.

OPTION C – INSTALL A BROWSER EXTENSION

A browser extension is an add-on that gives your browser additional features.

Instead of uploading images one by one to Google, Bing, TinEye, or Yandex, you can install a free browser extension that will do the work for you.

For Google Chrome, you can install a browser extension called 'RevEye': http://bit.ly/RevEyeReverseImageSearch

Once you have installed RevEye, follow these steps:

STEP 1: Right-click on an image online;

STEP 2: Select "Reverse Image Search" and then "All search engines." This will search for the image across all FOUR Reverse Image Search platforms: Google, Bing, Yandex, and TinEye.

STEP 3: Review the Results across all four platforms.

CASE STUDY:

Read this article to find out how AFP Fact-Check Canada used a Reverse Image Search to figure out whether an image that was circulating on social media was real or not, and whether it was taken out of context: http://bit.ly/AFPReverseImageSearch

TIP #4 – CHECK THE VIDEO

OPTION A – SOMETIMES A REVERSE IMAGE SEARCH WILL ALSO WORK FOR VIDEO.

STEP 1: Pause the video and select a frame;

STEP 2: Take a screenshot of the video frame.

On Windows, press the Print Screen key (PrtScn) on the upper-right side of your keyboard. On Apple computers, press Command-Shift-4, then click and drag over the frame. This will save the screenshot to your computer;

STEP 3: Upload the screenshot to any of the four Reverse Image Search platforms;

STEP 4. Review the results. If you don't recognize the name of the source where it was published, use Tip #1 to CHECK THE SOURCE.

OPTION B: INSTALL A BROWSER EXTENSION

If a Reverse Image Search did not turn up any results, you can also install a browser extension. Again, a browser extension is an add-on that gives your browser additional features.

This will take more practice than a Reverse Image Search but will yield better results and allow you to trace the origin of both videos and images online.

For Google Chrome, you can install a browser extension called 'Fake news debunker by InVID & WeVerify': http://bit.ly/InVIDWeVerifyForImagesVideos

Watch the Tutorial for a step-by-step guide, get some practice and compare your results to what fact-checkers reported online.

TIP #5 – FIND A FACT-CHECKING BUDDY

Fact-checking is a team sport and while we all have a role to play in stopping the spread of mis - and disinformation online, it is a lot easier (and more fun) to verify content online when you have someone else to do it with.

Find another person that you can talk to about fact-checking. It can be a colleague at school or work, or it can be a friend or a family member in your private group chat.

This way when someone sends you information or content that they think is true, you can Check It Before You Share It by enlisting the help of your fact-checking partner.

If the content does not check out, then the only person you will have shared it with is your fact-checking buddy instead of everyone in your group chat.

Remember, if the information is false or misleading, find a fact-check and share that with your social media circle instead.

Not sure where to find fact-checks? The next section will provide you with multiple, multilingual go-to sources for verifying information online.

PART II – MULTILINGUAL SOURCES TO FOLLOW

Fact-checking is at the heart of journalism. This is true whether you get your news from legacy media or newer, independent media.

Nevertheless, the rapid spread of mis – and disinformation online has given way to an additional need for full-time, independent fact-checkers that publish in various languages and countries around the world.

The International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), for instance, brings together dozens of fact-checkers worldwide. The IFCN is a unit of the Poynter Institute which is a non-profit journalism school and research organization located in St. Petersburg, Florida.

In this digital era, fact-checkers have become a key source for debunking false and misleading information online in addition to local and national journalists.

While it is important to diversify your sources overall, the following list is intended to complement — not replace — your local news which should be your primary source for facts.

Here is a list of suggested multilingual sources to follow, listed in alphabetical order.

Start by going to their websites and from there you'll see where you can follow them on social media.

Sources with an asterisk are located in Canada.

MULTILINGUAL SOURCES TO FOLLOW

Africa Check (English, French): https://africacheck.org

*Agence France-Presse Canada fact-checks: https://factcheck.afp.com/afp-canada

Agence France-Presse Fact-Check (multilingual)
English (you can search by world region): https://factcheck.afp.com
French: https://factuel.afp.com
Arabic: https://factuel.afp.com/ar/list
Spanish: https://www.afp.com/es
Portuguese: https://checamos.afp.com/list

Australian Associated Press: https://www.aap.com.au/category/factcheck/

BBC Reality Check: https://www.bbc.com/news/reality_check

BOOM Live: https://www.boomlive.in/fact-check

*BuzzFeed News https://www.buzzfeednews.com/author/janelytvynenko ; https://www.buzzfeednews.com/author/craigsilverman

*DisinfoWatch: https://disinfowatch.org

The International Fact Checking Network's CoronaVirusFacts Database (multilingual): https://www.poynter.org/ifcn-covid-19-misinformation/

Maldita (Spanish): https://maldita.es

MediaWise (U.S. teens fact-check videos that go viral): https://www.poynter.org/mediawise/

PolitiFact: https://www.politifact.com

*Radio-Canada's Les Décrypteurs is the only media in Canada that is a member of the International Fact-Checking Network (French): https://ici.tou.tv/decrypteurs ;https://ici.radio-canada.ca/decrypteurs

Snopes: https://www.snopes.com

PART III – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here is a list of additional fact-checking and digital literacy resources to help you sharpen your verification skills and learn how to stop the spread of mis – and disinformation online.

*Resources with an asterisk are from Canada.

*CIVIX is a non-partisan, national registered charity. You can use their digital literacy tools like Fake Out to practice the skills that you learned in this Tool Kit: https://newsliteracy.ca/fakeOut/

*CTRL-F is a bilingual (English-French) digital literacy project produced by CIVIX in 2020: https://ctrl-f.ca

*You can watch all the Fake Out and CTRL-F videos produced by CIVIX on YouTube: https://youtube.com/c/CTRLF

The International Fact-Checking Network's list of its multilingual fact-checking members: https://www.ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/signatories

*Journalists for Human Rights, what to do when friends share misinformation: https://jhr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/JHR2020-Disinformation-Public-Handout-Sharing.pdf

*Media Smarts is a digital and media literacy non-profit in Canada: https://mediasmarts.ca

The SIFT method by Mike Caulfield, a list of four moves to sort fact from fiction online: https://hapgood.us/2019/06/19/sift-the-four-moves/

Which Face Is Real, learn how to distinguish computer generated images from real photographs: https://www.whichfaceisreal.com

World Health Organization Myth Busters, easy-to-share on social media: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters

This Tool Kit was produced by Susana Mas (she/her), an independent journalist, news and digital literacy trainer on unceded Algonquin territory. Susana spent the better part of the past decade working as a Parliamentary journalist.

Today, Susana is the founder of *Verifiably*, a journalism start-up with a mission to equip people with accurate information, trusted sources of news and the tools needed to detect false and misleading information online: https://verifiably.swipepages.co; https://join.verifiably.ca

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