



Navigating Mis- and
Disinformation at an Older Age

LEARNING KIT

REAL WORLD SCENARIOS



Critical media literacy guidelines?

How to navigate news, spot bias, and challenge your own digital bubble.

Instructions

This learning kit offers practical guidelines for deconstructing news stories and recognizing the bias that often hides behind sensational headlines. By following these exercises, you will learn to spot information gaps and actively manage the digital algorithms that shape your daily information stream.

I Deconstruct the news (bias detection)

When reading any news story, stop and ask these four questions:

1. Where is the spin (language, style, tone)?
 - **Check the headline.** Is it emotionally charged words (contain words "Chaos," "Heroic," "Scandal")? If so, the goal is often sensationalism, not accuracy.
 - **Check the facts.** If the headline is extreme, does the actual article text present a much milder or more nuanced reality? (Identify the Mismatch).
2. What's missing (omission, selection):
 - **Check the sources.** Are experts or quotes only provided from one side of a controversial issue (identify source selection bias)?
 - **Check the context.** Did the article leave out an essential piece of information (e.g., a critical date, a counter-statistic, or a major opposing viewpoint) that would change the story's meaning?
3. Cross-check. Can you verify the core facts (names, dates, numbers) using at least two other independent, reputable news outlets? If not, the information is likely unreliable?
4. Each group presents whether they would share the story or not.

II Escaping the bubble (algorithm awareness)

Actively work to overcome the personalization algorithms that limit your information:

1. Use incognito/private mode for sensitive or political searches to bypass personalized results and see a wider range of sources.
2. Regularly and deliberately consume news and opinions from a reputable outlet that has an editorial stance opposite your own.

- When an ad or social media post strongly reinforces a belief, you already hold, do not interact (don't like/share). Instead, search for information that challenges your belief

Your goal is not to be just passive consumer but become the editor of your own information stream.

Examples

Look for articles published today or this week (articles about topical and important news). Capture the screenshots, headlines, main ideas.

I. Mismatch and sensationalism (headline versus content)

Focus	Scenario	What to search?
Financial scare	A news about the bad situation of our pension system	A headline using words like "PLUMMETS," "COLLAPSE," or "WIPED OUT," when the article text confirms that there are problems, but there are also solutions.
Environmental situation, climate change	Latest news about environmental situation.	A headline claiming a "CATASTROPHIC DANGER" or "IRREVERSIBLE DAMAGE," while the article text explains the findings are based on a small, localized sample or a theoretical long-term model (not an immediate crisis).
Health hype	Example - a new clinical trial or medical finding about a common drug or diet.	A headline that uses "CURE" or "SHOCKING BREAKTHROUGH," when the actual article states the results from trials or the findings showed only a "statistically significant, but small, benefit."

II. Omission and context bias

Focus	Scenario	What to search?
Government spending	A news report about a newly approved budget.	A story that focuses on rapid growth of state debt, rising interest expenses, lack of transparency in the budget etc.

Public opinion polling	A story reporting on public support for a political parties.	A story that uses a statistic like "Support is at a historic low of 40%," but omits the poll's methodology (e.g., <i>only surveying landlines</i> or <i>only surveying one specific demographic</i>), thus failing to provide complete context for the result.
Crime statistics	A report on a change in crime rates in your country.	A headline reporting a "200% SURGE IN CRIME," where the article confirms this is a year-over-year comparison from a single, unusually low baseline number (from 2 cases last year to 6 cases this year), misleadingly exaggerating the absolute threat.

III. Selection bias (sources and news focus)

Focus	Scenario	What to search?
Corporate policy	Coverage of a major corporate decision (moving production other countries, closing manufacturing plants, large investments moved elsewhere, regional problems).	A story that only quotes the CEO or a company spokesperson and fails to include quotes from labour representatives, consumers, local government officials, or financial critics.
Local protest	A story covering a public demonstration or protest march (closing enterprises, global conflicts).	A report that interviews only several march organizers and participants but fails to interview with the other half or people who think differently.
International conflict	A story about an ongoing conflict or political dispute.	A report that relies exclusively on statements from only one side, while failing to cite independent organizations or other sources.
Social media trends	An article covering an influencer, meme, or trend from social media platforms.	An article that solely quotes anonymous social media comments to prove that the public is outraged.