Check
That Fact

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When to fact-check

It can be tricky to know when and how to effectively fact-check a source. Maybe you are short on time, or maybe the source or claim seems okay and you feel like it is safe enough to use the source. Fact-checking

Fact-checking A process of confirming whether or not the claims in a source are accurate and true.

doesn't have to be overly time consuming or complicated, and even a brief fact-check can make the difference between sharing and inadvertently spreading false information online or stopping the spread of a rumour. Or, in another scenario, a fact-check can be the difference between avoiding citing a non-credible source in a paper or using incorrect information and getting a bad grade. Here are a few situations when it can be particularly important to take some time to fact-check a source:

- **Contentious issues** – It's always a good idea to fact-check sources that are dealing with highly-contentious issues, or issues where people tend to disagree. Issues that attract a lot of debate can also attract misinformation and more questionable sources.

- **Unknown or questionable sources** – If you aren't familiar with a source's author or publisher, or if you have some questions or concerns about the author or publisher, it is a good idea to do some fact-checking.

- **Lack of references** – If the source you found does not include any citations or references it is a good idea to fact-check the claims in the source. This can also apply if the source includes links that seem suspicious or do not really provide any information or back-up the claims being made.

- **Lack of knowledge** – If you know very little about a topic, be sure to fact-check sources you come across. It is much easier to be fooled by non-credible sources if you do not know much about the topic than if you have expertise and are able to more easily identify issues or problems with the source.

Remember, fact-checking doesn't happen in a vacuum! Fact-checking is part of your broader source evaluation strategy and you can consider what you know about the source type, the author and publisher, and other source evaluation criteria in conjunction with a fact-check. For instance, if a source is coming from a known and trusted location, and you know about the topic already, you might not spend as much time fact-checking the claims than if the source is coming from an unknown publication and covers an unfamiliar topic.

How to fact-check

If you identify a source that requires some fact-checking, there are a few strategies and tips that you can use to help you run a successful fact-check:

- **Run a search and see what others are saying** – A quick Internet search can help you get a sense of what others are saying about your topic and whether or not they disagree with the source you found and the claims you are investigating.

- **Visit a fact-checking website** – There are a number of helpful websites that fact-check different topics and issues and provide a breakdown of whether or not a claim is true or false. Some notable fact-checking sites include Snopes and PolitiFact.

- **Visit trusted publications and authors** – If you have questions about a source, see if a publication or author that you trust has written about the topic. Do they agree or disagree with the source that you have found?

- **Check the source's sources** – If the source includes any citations, references, or links, check those to see what they say and where they go. Do the references look credible and do they support the claims of the source?