

What is "FACT Checking"?

In this section we will talk about what fact checking and fake news are in relation to **investigative journalism**, and **where to search** for reliable information.

In short, **fact checking** is the way of verifying the truthfulness of a text, sentence, claim, image, footage, clip or any form of media content we are receiving, producing or publishing.



Fact-checking and accountability journalism

Fact-checking as a form of journalistic writing refers to the assessment of statements and rhetoric for accuracy and truthfulness, as well as the debunking of viral stories and rumours. Fact-checking is a form of **accountability journalism** because the statements are typically made by people in politics, government or other powerful positions who are held accountable for their words and actions. Fact-checks require original sources, intense research, and high-quality data.



Take a look at

Fact Checking: A Primer by Jane Elizabeth
American Press Institute, September 2017.

CRAP test (*Currency, reliability, authority and purpose / point of view*)

The CRAP test is a way to evaluate a source based on the following criteria: **Currency, Reliability, Authority** and **Purpose/Point of View**. On the next page you can find some questions to help you think about how to measure each of the criteria.

DO YOUR RESOURCES PASS THE C.R.A.P. TEST?

	0 Points	1 Point	2 points	3 points
CURRENCY	<input type="checkbox"/> No updates shown	<input type="checkbox"/> Updates shown but long past	<input type="checkbox"/> Updates shown <input type="checkbox"/> Slightly dated	<input type="checkbox"/> Regular, current updates
RELIABILITY	<input type="checkbox"/> Inaccurate information <input type="checkbox"/> Incomplete information	<input type="checkbox"/> Amateur <input type="checkbox"/> Borrows from other sources <input type="checkbox"/> No citations <input type="checkbox"/> No links to other resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Passed some editorial control <input type="checkbox"/> Largely borrows from other sources <input type="checkbox"/> Some citations <input type="checkbox"/> Some links to reliable resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Scholarly <input type="checkbox"/> Original <input type="checkbox"/> Bibliography or citations provided <input type="checkbox"/> Links to and from other reliable resources
AUTHORITY	<input type="checkbox"/> No author <input type="checkbox"/> No publisher	<input type="checkbox"/> Author or group author <input type="checkbox"/> No credentials <input type="checkbox"/> No publisher <input type="checkbox"/> No organizational support	<input type="checkbox"/> Author or group author <input type="checkbox"/> Publisher or organizational support	<input type="checkbox"/> Expert author or expert group of authors Credentials provided <input type="checkbox"/> Reputable publisher or organization
PURPOSE	<input type="checkbox"/> Unfairly biased* <input type="checkbox"/> Holds an agenda	<input type="checkbox"/> Some bias* <input type="checkbox"/> More opinion than fact <input type="checkbox"/> Unbalanced to a fault	<input type="checkbox"/> Small biases* <input type="checkbox"/> Shows some balance	<input type="checkbox"/> Largely unbiased* <input type="checkbox"/> No clear agenda <input type="checkbox"/> May be balanced with multiple viewpoints

• Your judgements in each of the categories are merely guidelines; ultimately, you have to take the whole into consideration.
• *Bias is in everything we read. Your job is to determine how much the bias influences the piece.

Currency

- How recent is the information?
- How recently has the website been updated?
- Is it current enough for your topic?

Reliability

- Is this fact or opinion?
- Is it biased?
- Is the creator/author trying to sell you something?

Authority

- Who is the creator or author?
- What are the credentials?
- Who is the publisher or sponsor?
- Are they reputable?
- What is the publisher's interest (if any) in this information?
- Are there advertisements on the website?

Purpose/Point of View

- Is this fact or opinion?
- Is it biased?
- Is the creator/author trying to sell you something?

Fact Checking

There are some typical questions that can drive journalists “mad”, but can serve well in critically assessing a story, its background and fact. The same questions you can **ask yourself** when presenting certain claims, to make sure that these facts are truthful and well grounded:

- How do you prove friendship/connection between two persons?
- How can you tell that certain events happened due to „friendship / connections” between person / groups / institutions?
- How do you prove that someone is close to *government / establishment*?
- How do you prove that certain situation, case is “specific” and thereby that there is *corruption, clientelism, connections, lobbying* etc.? Can you show that this particular case or situation is specific in comparison to other cases?

Manual of the **Center for Investigative Journalism of Serbia** gives the following conclusion:

„The best answer to all the aforementioned questions is always the proof. Proofs are, above all, documents. Fact checker is the happiest to obtain the official documents, that is, the documents of relevant state institutions, even though s/he sometimes takes them with a grain of salt. Proofs are also information about public and private companies, audio and video footages (interviews, transcripts, court material), photos, phone listings, address books, print-screens from websites, Google maps and so on.”