

# Use the Web To Check the Web

## Based on *Web Literacy For Student Fact-checkers*

by Michael Caulfield

<https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com/chapter/four-strategies/>

“Information is abundant, and time is scarce.”

## Four Moves...

Moves accomplish intermediate goals in the fact-checking process. They are associated with specific tactics. Here are our moves:

- **Check for previous work:** Look around to see if someone else has already fact-checked the claim or provided a synthesis of research.
  - Politifact, Snopes, Wikipedia
- **Go upstream to the source:** Go “upstream” to the source of the claim. Most web content is not original. Get to the original source to understand the trustworthiness of the information.
  - Find a journal or news publication, preferably reputable
- **Read laterally:** Read laterally.<sup>[1]</sup> Once you get to the source of a claim, read what other people say about the source (publication, author, etc.). The truth is in the network.
  - Fact-check the source
- **Circle back:** If you get lost, or hit dead ends, or find yourself going down an increasingly confusing rabbit hole, back up and start over knowing what you know now. You’re likely to take a more informed path with different search terms and better decisions.
  - Go back to the original claim

In general, you can try these moves in sequence, and at each stage if you find success your work might be done.

## ...And a Habit

Use strong emotional responses - anger, outrage, indignation, elation - as a reminder to fact-check. The more you pause and check before sharing, the better your fact-checking habit - and your commitment to online truth.

**You will love to right-click › Open in new tab!**

1. We are indebted to researcher Sam Wineburg for this language

# Check for previous work

See who may already have fact-checked the article

## Some Reputable Fact-Checking Organizations

The following organizations are generally regarded as reputable fact-checking organizations focused on U.S. national news:

- [PolitiFact](#)
- [Factcheck.org](#)
- [Snopes](#)
- [Truth be Told](#)
- [NPR Fact-Check](#)
- [Lie Detector](#) (Univision, Spanish language)
- [Hoax Slayer](#)
- [Washington Post Fact Checker](#)

Respected specialty sites cover niche areas such as climate or celebrities. Here's a few examples:

- [Climate Feedback](#)
- [SciCheck](#)
- [Quote Investigator](#)

There are many fact-checking sites outside the U.S. Here is a small sample.

- [FactsCan](#) (Canada)
- [TrudeauMetre](#) (Canada)
- [El Polígrafo](#) (Mexico)
- [The Hound](#) (Mexico)
- [Guardian Reality Check](#) (UK)
- [BBC Reality Check](#) (UK)
- [Channel 4 Fact Check](#)
- [Full Fact](#) (UK)

<https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com/chapter/fact-checking-sites/>

## Use Wikipedia

- Articles are built on consensus and there are strict rules for sourcing facts
- Use articles that have clear citations to reputable, third-party sources
- Follow footnote links to original sources
- [Five Pillars of Wikipedia](#)

# Go Upstream To the Source

- “Where did this come from, and who produced it?”
- Follow the “via” source of “reporting on reporting”
- In Google Chrome, highlight an unlinked source, right-click it, and choose the option to search Google for it. Add keywords that match the content you’re looking for.
  - Choose local sources or links to sites where information was first published
  - Use Tools > Time filter to filter by time and date
- Use google images to find sources of photos (in Chrome, right-click the photo)
- Pull the text off the image and put it in a Google reverse image search

## Watch For Sponsored Content

- Clearly marked advertising content, the words “Sponsored,” “Ad by,”
- Articles written by vested interests

## Check for syndication

- Syndicator is the source
- Read the byline for alternate publishers or authors

# Read laterally

- Reading “across” websites for comparisons
- Why not use a site’s About page?  
\*\*If they’re not trustworthy, can you believe their About page?\*\*
- Open multiple tabs so you can search for information about the author, the website, the factual content
  - Search the web for info *about* the site that’s not *on* the site itself
- See who links to the site
- Find out who owns the site and when it was registered
  - Search whois <https://whois.icann.org/en>
  - Internet Archive Wayback Machine <http://web.archive.org/>

# Circle back

Use what you’ve learned and start again on a new track.

## Activity: Spot Sponsored Content

1. Rank the following news sources on how much sponsored content you believe their pages will feature: CNN, BuzzFeed, Washington Post, Huffington Post, Breitbart, New York Times.
2. Individually or in groups, visit the following pages and list all sponsored content you see, tallying up the total amount on each page.
3. Then rank the sites from most sponsored content to least.

Projected Rank	Site	Tally Sponsored Content Items	Total #	Actual Rank
	<a href="#">CNN</a>			
	<a href="#">Vox</a>			
	<a href="#">Buzzfeed</a>			
	<a href="#">Washington Post</a>			
	<a href="#">Huffington Post</a>			
	<a href="#">Breitbart</a>			
	<a href="#">New York Times</a>			

Did the ranking surprise you at all?

## Activity: Evaluate a Site

Evaluate the reputations of the following sites by “reading laterally.” Who runs them? To what purpose? What is their history of accuracy and how do they rate on process, aim, and expertise?

Site	Who owns it?	Purpose?	Accuracy?
<a href="http://cis.org/vaughan/">http://cis.org/vaughan/...</a>			
<a href="http://www.al.com/news/montgomery/">http://www.al.com/news/montgomery/...</a>			
<a href="https://codoh.com/media/files/">https://codoh.com/media/files/...</a>			
<a href="http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/">http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/...</a>			
<a href="http://www.dailykos.com/">http://www.dailykos.com/...</a>			
<a href="https://nsidc.org/">https://nsidc.org/</a>			