

# How can I build a curriculum to help learners understand how journalism works?

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June 2025



# Evaluating Journalism

How do journalists and editors decide what news to cover and which stories to promote to readers and news consumers? Why is it important for us to understand this?

An essential 21st century skill is learning how to distinguish information that is reliable from disinformation, misinformation and fake news.

Information literacy requires an understanding of the media landscape and knowledge about how to use our critical thinking skills in this landscape. The decisions journalists and editors make are important to all of us as they shape the news media landscape. If we understand a little about how these decisions are made, it helps us analyze and evaluate the media we are consuming and interacting with.



# Understanding Journalism

What is the role of news organizations in the media landscape and how do they work?

What is standards-based journalism?

What are the standards?

What is newsworthiness?

These questions and more are answered at the News Literacy Project site for students and educators.





# News Literacy Project and Checkology



The [News Literacy Project](#) is a website designed to help teachers make sure that students are skilled in news literacy and develop the knowledge and ability to participate in their communities as well-informed, critical thinkers.

[Checkology](#) is a virtual classroom from the News Literacy Project.

Many of the lessons on this site are presented by working journalists.



checkology®

# NLP Curriculum Framework

Teachers can access the News Literacy Project curriculum framework here: [Standards For Teaching News Literacy](#).

The language in this document may help you articulate outcomes in a way that is aligned with the curriculum and standards you are using in your program.



# Accessing the Lessons and Activities

All the [News Literacy Project](#) educator resources are openly available to anyone. Go to the News Literacy Project, click on the **For Educators** tab and choose [Resource Library](#) to explore.

To use the [Checkology](#) part of this website, you will eventually need to create an Educator account and set up a classroom. To set up an educator account, you need to choose a school. You can apply to make your program a school, or you can use AlphaPlus as your school.

For this guide, you can [sign up as a student](#) to see this specific collection of lessons.





# NLP Resource Library Instructional Supports

The News Literacy Project [resource library](#) has lessons that include

- a lesson plan
- usually a slide deck
- a combination of quizzes, worksheets, infographics and/or handouts
- a list of related resources
- and sometimes a link to the \*Checkology version of the lesson



\*Anyone can access the NLP instructional materials from the website. To access the Checkology lessons, you need to register as an educator.

Adaptations:

- K-12 (In the material I have looked at, this seems to be a minor issue.)
- US content (Some of the lessons focus on issues or examples that are specific to the US and may not work well in a Canadian classroom.)

# Checkology Instructional Supports

Each Checkology lesson comes with instructional supports:

- Lesson Guide
- Related resources
- Transcript
- Answer Keys
- Posters
- Related assignments – the extended practice exercises and challenges
- Related educator resources – lesson plans, slide decks and worksheets from the News Literacy Project resource library





# The plan

Over the next pages, we will look at some possibilities for how to combine [News Literacy Project](#) activities and [Checkology](#) lessons to create an *Understanding Journalism* curriculum for emergent readers.



# Resources

The possibilities include the following resource types:

**Infographics and Posters** – give an overview and summary of the lessons

**Classroom Activities** – are activities that prompt discussion. (Usually a slide deck and/or a worksheet.)

**News Goggles** from **The Sift** newsletter – are videos of journalists explaining the work they do.

**Checkology Lessons** – are virtual lessons that can be viewed by individuals or used by facilitators to present information or prompt discussion.



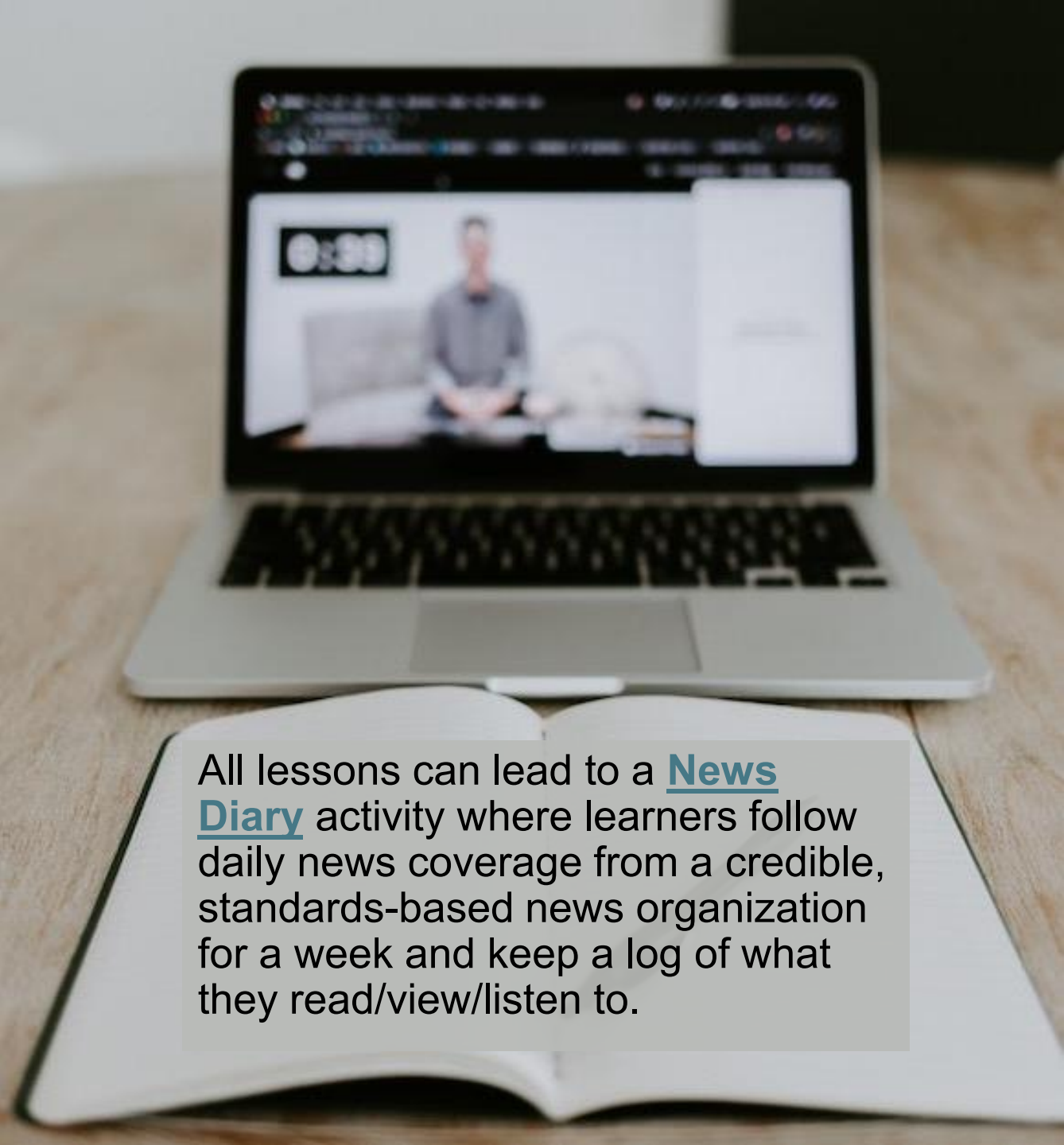
# Building Curriculum

We will start by examining the question “**What is news?**”

Learners will learn about how journalists and editors make choices and how that impacts our understanding of the world.

Then we will look at two ways of learning:

- **Theory:** Learners will listen to journalists talk about their work and learn some journalist lingo.
- **Practice:** Learners will have opportunities to act as editors and journalists and build critical thinking skills they can use to judge news coverage.

A photograph of a laptop on a wooden surface. The laptop screen shows a video of a man sitting at a desk. In the foreground, an open notebook is visible. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid on the notebook.

All lessons can lead to a [News Diary](#) activity where learners follow daily news coverage from a credible, standards-based news organization for a week and keep a log of what they read/view/listen to.



# How to see the Checkology lessons

To try out the lessons we include here, you can sign up with a student account and go to the AlphaPlus classroom.

Here is how:

1. Go to [checkology.org](https://checkology.org).
2. Click Register with class code.
3. Use the code  
JAR-ENGINE-DOUBLE.
4. Set up your student account. You are required to add a name and a password. You can optionally add an email address.

Note: I did not get any emails from Checkology when I signed up as a student.



# What is news?

Limited time and resources means that journalists and editors must decide which stories are most newsworthy.

The factors that determine newsworthiness include how

- timely,
- important,
- interesting and
- unique a story is.

Decisions made using these Big Four criteria impacts what issues and events get covered — and how prominently.

Infographic:

<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/what-is-news/>



# What is news? Pre-reading

## Questions to get started

- What does it mean for an issue or an event to be “newsworthy”?
- What makes an issue or event “news”? Who decides?
- What factors should be used to determine which issues and events get covered by journalists?

To sign in to this class, use the code: JAR-ENGINE-DOUBLE and choose the first lesson.

## Resource Links

Checkology:  
<https://checkology.org/>

Content → What is news?  
<https://checkology.org/lessons/lesson/2>

Resources →  
[https://checkology.org/resources?category\\_id=\\*&lesson\\_id=2](https://checkology.org/resources?category_id=*&lesson_id=2)



# Facilitating Checkology Lessons



The reading levels in some of the Checkology lessons are quite high. The teachers who reviewed the lessons felt that some learners might find it difficult to answer the questions individually. We explored the idea of working through the material in a facilitated way with groups of learners or individual learners.

The following page is how we did the first part of the *What is news?* lesson with a group.

We've used stars to indicate the level of difficulty of each lesson in relation to the other lessons. Three-star lessons are the most challenging and one-star lessons are the least challenging. The stars do not correlate to reading levels.

# What is news? Frames 1-16

## Lesson plan

- Watch video 1 (1:22)
- Read the instructions.
- Read the stories and discuss.
- Ask learners to choose the most newsworthy story. Ask them to vote for story 1 or 2. Choose the story that gets the most votes and click next.
- Ask learners why they voted the way they did. Ask them to vote for a reason listed on the [infographic](#): timely, important, interesting, or unique. Type in the reason that gets the most votes and click next to hear a video explanation by the journalist.
- Continue this way through the first 4 examples (Frames 1 – 16).

Video 2: 0:45  
Video 3: 1:11  
Video 4: 0:36  
Video 5: 2:37

[Transcript](#)

[Answer Key](#)

We found that this lesson took 30-45 minutes in a Zoom class with teachers.



# Where next?

## Practice

Checkology lessons and activities where learners can apply knowledge and practice skills.

## Theory

Activities (slide decks, videos of interviews with journalists and worksheets) that prompt discussion and generate discussion.



News Diary



# Practice: More samples



## Lesson Idea

Continue with **What is news?** (Lesson 1 at JAR-ENGINE-DOUBLE) and try some more samples.

The reading level may be challenging for beginners. For some learners this may work better as a classroom activity than an individual one.

Alternatively, find some easier to read news stories and discuss how newsworthy they are.

Or you could use stories collected in a [News Diary](#) and analyse them for newsworthiness (timely, important, interesting, unique).

Infographics →

- [Quality Journalism](#)
- [Breaking News](#)

## Easier to read news

### Free

Simple English News

[www.simpleenglishnews.com](http://www.simpleenglishnews.com)

News in Levels (there is a level assessment when you start)

[www.newsinlevels.com](http://www.newsinlevels.com)

Breaking News English (nothing at the beginner level)

[breakingnewsenglish.com](http://breakingnewsenglish.com)

### Subscription

News for You at New Readers Press

[www.newreaderspress.com/News-for-You-Online\\_2](http://www.newreaderspress.com/News-for-You-Online_2)

# Practice: Be the editor



## Lesson Idea

Try out **Be the editor**. (Lesson 2 at JAR-ENGINE-DOUBLE)

- How should news organizations decide which news reports to feature as the top stories of the day?
- What are the general criteria news organizations use to determine which stories to feature more prominently than others?

In this lesson, learners are asked to build a news web page. They are asked to choose the 5 most newsworthy stories and put them in order. Then they are sent a breaking news story and are asked to decide whether to replace one of their choices. Once they publish, they can read comments on the stories and evaluate their choices.

## Links

Checkology:

<https://checkology.org/>

Content → Be the editor

<https://checkology.org/lessons/lesson/11#/1>

Resources →

[https://checkology.org/resources?category\\_id=\\*&lesson\\_id=11](https://checkology.org/resources?category_id=*&lesson_id=11)

Infographics →

- [Quality Journalism](#)
- [Breaking News](#)

# Practice: Practicing quality journalism



## Lesson Idea

Try out **Practicing quality journalism**. (Lesson 3 at JAR-ENGINE-DOUBLE)

- How is news journalism different from opinion journalism?
- What rules and guidelines should journalists abide by when reporting a story, and why?
- What is required to make a piece of information credible?
- How do aspiring to the standards of quality journalism help journalists minimize bias and produce credible news coverage?

Learners act as a journalist on assignment and are asked to examine the scene, interview sources, create a social media post, make decisions about what to report, etc.

The reading level in this lesson is quite high and, conceptually, answering the questions can be challenging. The videos are very interesting and describe the challenges journalists and editors face in choosing stories and covering events. This could be a classroom activity or group project.

## Links

Checkology:

<https://checkology.org/>

Content → Practicing quality journalism

<https://checkology.org/lessons/lesson/11#/1>

Resources →

[https://checkology.org/resources?category\\_id=\\*&lesson\\_id=8](https://checkology.org/resources?category_id=*&lesson_id=8)

Note: The phone calls are not captioned.

Infographics →

- [Quality Journalism](#)
- [Breaking News](#)



# Theory: Lingo (Slides)



## Lesson Idea

Try out **News Goggles: Newsroom lingo review**.

A slide deck that provides a review of terms that journalists use to describe different parts of a story.

**Discuss:** Do you have a favorite journalism term? Were any of these terms completely new to you? Were any surprising? Do you think any of them are confusing? Will you start using any of the terms, such as “graf”?

**Idea:** Challenge students in groups to find examples of each term in news reports and share their findings with classmates.

### Lingo

- Lede
- Pick up
- Graf
- Beat
- Nut graf
- A1
- PIO
- Scoop
- “Breaking” a story
- Byline
- Kicker quote
- Dateline
- Developing story

## Links

<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/news-goggles-newsroom-lingo-review/>

[Easier to Read News](#)

[News Diary](#)

Infographic →  
[Quality Journalism](#)

# Theory: Lingo and Credible sources (Slides)



## Lesson Idea

### Try out **News Goggles: AP wildfire story**

A slide deck that uses some of the lingo from the [Newsroom lingo review](#) to analyze the coverage of wildfires in terms of format and use of sources.

#### **Discuss:**

- The story begins by spotlighting the death toll from the wildfire. Is this sensationalizing? Why would leading with human loss be important?
- Do you agree that every news report about wildfires should mention that climate change makes them more common and severe?

**Idea:** Review the sources used in this AP report or another news story. Do you think including diverse sources (in terms of age, gender, race, economic background, etc.) affects the news coverage in any way? If so, how?

## Links

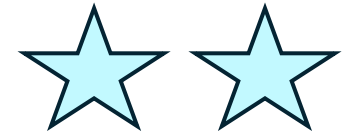
<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/news-goggles-ap-wildfire-story/>

[Easier to Read News](#)

[News Diary](#)

Infographic →  
[Quality Journalism](#)

# Theory: Credible sources (Slides)



## Lesson Idea

Try out **News Goggles: Quotes in news reports**.

A slide deck that takes a look at the use of quotes in several stories on a power outage in Texas.

**Discuss:** How should journalists decide what information to quote directly, rather than opting to summarize or paraphrase? What kind of quotes are the most effective or impactful?

**Idea:** Ask students to find a news story on the aftermath of severe weather. Have students analyze the quotes in their chosen story and label the source type of each quote (eyewitness, officials, experts, documents, etc.). Is there a good variety of sources? Which quote is best and why? Where is the chosen quote located in the story? Do students agree with the order of the quotes? If they had written the news report, which quote would they have included first? Which one would they put last? Why?

## Links

<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/news-goggles-quotes-in-news-reports/>

[Easier to Read News](#)

[News Diary](#)

Infographic →

[Quality Journalism](#)

### Lingo

Anecdotal

Lede

Voice of god

Nut graf

Colour quote

Kicker quote

Quote versus paraphrase or summary

# Theory: Newsworthiness (Video Interview)



## Lesson Idea

Try out **News Goggles: Miguel Otárola, Colorado Public Radio**.

Newsworthiness is a key concept in news literacy. With so many stories competing for attention, journalists must determine which events and issues to cover, and how prominently.

In this video, Miguel Otárola of Colorado Public Radio talks about how he decides which story ideas to pursue in his role covering climate and the environment.

Use the Viewing Guide to reflect and analyse on how Miguel Otárola describes his process.

How did Otárola get his idea for the Cal-Wood story?

What made it newsworthy?

Think about 'The Big Four' elements of newsworthiness, or how timely, important, interesting and unique a story is.

## Links

<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/news-goggles-miguel-otarola-colorado-public-radio/>

Viewing Guide

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1qFcVND1Wna65XR7rA0Jym28hYBIOMKljAiFE2asATc/edit?usp=sharing>

Infographics →

- [Quality Journalism](#)
- [Breaking News](#)
- [News media bias](#)
- [Understanding bias](#)



# Theory: Viral stories (Video Interview)



## Lesson Idea

Try out **News Goggles: María Luisa Paúl, The Washington Post**.

Newsworthiness is a key concept in news literacy. With so many stories competing for attention, journalists must determine which events and issues to cover, and how prominently.

In this video, María Luisa Paúl of The Washington Post talks about how she decided to cover a viral story about a boy who loves corn.

Use the Viewing Guide to reflect and analyse on how María Luisa Paúl describes his process.

- Why are these kinds of stories — ones that are social media-driven and related to internet culture — important to cover?

## Links

<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/news-goggles-maria-luisa-paul-the-washington-post/>

Viewing Guide

[https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/10\\_3\\_22\\_FINAL\\_Dig-Deeper\\_NEWS\\_GOGGLES.p  
df](https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/10_3_22_FINAL_Dig-Deeper_NEWS_GOGGLES.pdf)

Infographics →

- [Quality Journalism](#)
- [Breaking News](#)
- [Is it legit?](#)

# Theory: Fact or Opinion? (Slides)



## Lesson Idea

Try out **Classroom Activity: Is it “checkable”?**

This lesson introduces the concepts of fact-based and opinion-based statements using a group activity (with accompanying slides) called “Two Facts and a Feeling.”

Learners examine sets of three statements and decide which two are fact-based and which one is opinion-based (a “feeling”). Use the flow chart included in this lesson to guide learners through characteristics of facts versus opinions. Then, each group composes its own set of two facts and one opinion to share.

Worksheet - [https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Fact-vs-Opinion\\_GraphicOrganizer.pdf](https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Fact-vs-Opinion_GraphicOrganizer.pdf)

Flow Chart - [https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Fact-or-Opinion\\_FlowChart.pdf](https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Fact-or-Opinion_FlowChart.pdf)

Comprehension check - [https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Two-Facts-Feeling\\_ComprehensionCheck.pdf](https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Two-Facts-Feeling_ComprehensionCheck.pdf)

## Links

<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/classroom-activity-is-it-checkable/>

Lesson Plan

[https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Facts\\_v\\_Opinion\\_Is\\_it\\_checkable.pdf](https://newslit.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Facts_v_Opinion_Is_it_checkable.pdf)

[News Diary](#)

Infographics →

- [News media bias](#)
- [Understanding bias](#)

# Practice: Understanding bias



## Lesson Idea

Try out **Understanding Bias**. (Lesson 4 at JAR-ENGINE-DOUBLE)

Understand news media bias by learning about five types of bias and five ways it can manifest itself, as well as methods for minimizing it.

Learners listen to a journalist explain different aspects of bias and then are asked to analyze sets of articles and choose the most objective among them.

Is it possible for a piece of information to be completely unbiased or objective?

Are there degrees of bias?

Most people know about political or “partisan” bias. What are some other kinds of biases people have?

How do biases show themselves in news coverage?

The reading level in this lesson is quite high and, conceptually, answering the questions can be challenging. The videos are very interesting and describe the challenges journalists and editors face in choosing stories and covering events. This could be a classroom activity. Frame 7 explains the 5 types of bias and Frame 16-18 describes the forms of bias.

## Links

Checkology:

<https://checkology.org/>

Content → Understanding bias

<https://checkology.org/lessons/lesson/11#/1>

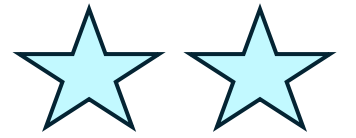
Resources →

[https://checkology.org/resources?category\\_id=\\*%&lesson\\_id=116](https://checkology.org/resources?category_id=*%&lesson_id=116)

Infographics →

- [News media bias](#)
- [Understanding bias](#)

# Practice: Power in art



## Lesson Idea

Try out **Power in Art: The Watchdog Role of Editorial Cartoonists**

(Lesson 5 at JAR-ENGINE-DOUBLE).

Learn about the history of editorial cartooning as a unique and powerful form of opinion journalism and practice analyzing cartoons from the 1700s to the present day.

- What makes political cartoons an effective and powerful form of expression?
- Why do they elicit strong responses, including from those in power?
- What can a cartoon do or express that text cannot? What can a cartoon/drawing express that a photo cannot?
- Are memes modern-day editorial cartoons — or are they different?
- How can graphic political expression influence civic discourse and engagement?

This is shorter and the questions are not as difficult as in other Checkology lessons. This lesson would be good for learners preparing for the [Canadian Adult Education Credential](#) (CAEC ) social studies test. The test asks participants to analyse political cartoons.

## Links

Checkology:

<https://checkology.org/>

Content → Understanding bias

<https://checkology.org/lessons/lesson/11#/1>

Resources →

[https://checkology.org/resources?category\\_id=\\*&lesson\\_id=116](https://checkology.org/resources?category_id=*&lesson_id=116)

Infographics →

- [News media bias](#)
- [Understanding bias](#)

# Practice: News Diary (Worksheet)



## Lesson Idea

### Try out **Classroom Activity: News Diary**

In this activity, students will follow daily news coverage from a credible, standards-based news organization for a week and to keeping a log of what they read/view/listen to.

Part 1: Document this data using a worksheet to record the date, the story, what was learned and questions.

Part 2: Review the sheet and identify the most interesting and helpful stories. Describe how this experience with a standards-based news source has or hasn't changed your thinking.

## Links

<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/news-diary/>

[Easier to Read News](#)

Infographics →

- [Quality Journalism](#)
- [Breaking News](#)
- [Is it legit?](#)
- [News media bias](#)
- [Understanding bias](#)



# Infographics

Many of the Checkology lessons have an accompanying infographic that present the main principles or guidelines covered in the lessons. They can be a starting point or be used to create your own lessons.

The [Polarizing Times](#) infographic is a little different – it is instructions for teachers about how to facilitate discussions.

The following 3 infographics focus on the journalism standards: [Quality Journalism](#) presents the standards and [Breaking News](#) and [Is it legit?](#) propose ways to see if those standards are present in the information we are looking at.

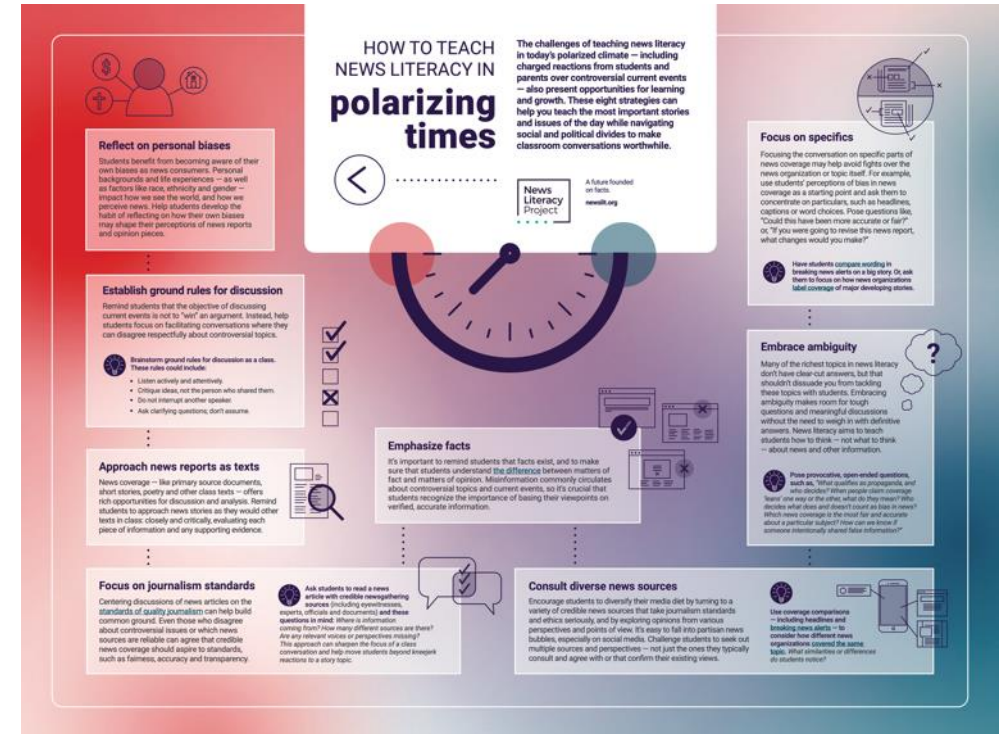
The last two are about bias. [Understanding Bias](#) presents us with information about types and forms of bias and [News Media Bias](#) proposes ways to analyze bias in information we access.



# Background: Polarizing Times (Infographic)

## Teaching Tips

1. Challenge students **to reflect on personal biases** and consider how these biases impact how they see the world, and how they perceive news.
2. **Establish ground rules for discussion** to keep the conversation respectful.
3. **Approach news reports as texts** and encourage students to read closely and critically.
4. **Focus on journalism standards** to help build common ground.
5. Emphasize facts and make sure students understand the difference between matters of fact and matters of opinion.
6. Encourage students to **consult diverse news sources** to avoid falling into partisan news bubbles.
7. **Embrace ambiguity** to make room for tough questions and meaningful discussions without the need for definitive answers.
8. **Focus on specifics** and particular parts of news coverage to avoid fights over the news organization or topic itself.



Infographic:

<https://newsliit.org/educators/resources/how-to-teach-news-literacy-in-polarizing-times/>

# Background: Quality Journalism (Infographic)

## Knowledge to develop

### Multiple Credible Sources

People in a position to know relevant facts and details, including eyewitnesses, officials and experts.

### Avoidance of Bias

Presenting the facts and necessary context in a dispassionate manner.

### Documentation

Reports, studies, data, videos, photos and audio recordings.

### Fairness

Treating sources and subjects with appropriate respect and giving subjects a chance to share their points of view or respond to any assertions or allegations about them.

### Verification

The process of checking and confirming all facts and details in a report.

### Balance

Representing multiple sides of the issue, event or controversy — but without giving undue weight or legitimacy to one side or point of view.

### Context

Presenting the facts in a way that makes their meaning clear, fair and accurate.

Infographic: <https://newslit.org/educators/resources/seven-standards-quality-journalism/>





# Background: Breaking News (Infographic)

## Skills to develop

1. **Mind the gap:** Keep in mind that there's often a gap between what the public wants to know and the verified information available. Unconfirmed or false content often rushes in to fill that gap.
2. **Beware bad actors:** Remember that bad actors often capitalize on breaking news situations to spread falsehoods for easy likes and shares.
3. **Do a quick search:** This is often your best defense against misinformation.
4. **Look for evidence:** Claims that make bold assertions but provide no links or other evidence should always be approached with caution.
5. **Seek credible sources:** Be intentional about looking for credible news and not relying on social media algorithms to bring you updates.
6. **Practice patience:** Quality journalism and verification take time. Be ready to follow news developments over time.



Infographic:

<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/breaking-news-checklist/>

Breaking News Handbook:

[www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/otm/articles/breaking-news-consumers-handbook-pdf](http://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/otm/articles/breaking-news-consumers-handbook-pdf)

# Background: Is it legit? (Infographic)

## Skills to develop

1. **Do a quick search:** Conducting a simple search for information about a news source is a key first step in evaluating its credibility.
2. **Look for standards:** Reputable news organizations aspire to ethical guidelines and standards, including fairness, accuracy and independence.
3. **Check for transparency:** Quality news sources should be transparent, not only about their reporting practices (see above), but also about their ownership and funding.
4. **Examine how errors are handled:** Credible news sources are accountable for mistakes and correct them. Do you see evidence that this source corrects or clarifies errors?
5. **Assess news coverage:** An important step in vetting sources is taking time to read and assess several news articles.

Infographic: <https://newslit.org/educators/resources/is-it-legit/>

SmartNews App:

[https://www.smartnews.com/en?random\\_uuid=bb32d2ff-4727-4c4a-ab24-cedcef3219a7](https://www.smartnews.com/en?random_uuid=bb32d2ff-4727-4c4a-ab24-cedcef3219a7)

**Is it legit?**

Test your source savvy!  
Scan this QR code to put your source-vetting skills to the test.

Many sources compete for attention online, including partisan blogs and bogus sites posing as legitimate news organizations. It can be tough to know what to trust. Follow these steps to cut through the noise and learn how to evaluate sources for signs of credibility – as well as for red flags that signal a source should be avoided.

**Five steps for vetting a news source**

- 1 Do a quick search**  
Conducting a simple search for information about a news source is a key first step in evaluating its credibility. It's important to look beyond social media. Go to a search engine and plug in the name of the website or publication. Do other legitimate sources, such as standards-based news organizations or fact-checking websites, describe this publication as unreliable? Science? Is it a state-run propaganda "news" site? If so, there's no need to spend more time vetting. Look elsewhere for reliable information.  
**Tip:** Wikipedia can be a good place to start and lead you to relevant source links; just keep in mind that some credible local newsrooms may not have an entry there. You can also see if a source has been vetted for inclusion on news aggregators, such as Google News, Apple News and SmartNews.
- 2 Look for standards**  
Reputable news organizations aspire to ethical guidelines and standards, including fairness, accuracy and independence. These standards should be available publicly – often in the form of editorial policies or a code of ethics. Look for evidence that a source follows such standards. If someone is mentioned in a critical story, for instance, did the journalist give that person a chance to comment?  
**Note:** Some professional journalism standards are commonly shared across the industry, such as the Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics. Other policies are unique to different newsrooms.
- 3 Check for transparency**  
Quality news sources should be transparent, not only about their reporting practices (see Step 2), but also about their ownership and funding. Is it clear who owns and runs this website or publication? Is advertising labeled responsibly? Can you tell who is writing and producing content? Is there a way to contact newsroom editors and reporters?  
**Remember:** "About" pages can provide some of these details, but they can also be misleading and omit important information (about a source's ownership or lack of independence, for example). Don't be fooled by a sleek web design, or trust the "About" page on an unfamiliar site without further verification. If something seems suspicious, check it out.
- 4 Examine how errors are handled**  
Credible news sources are accountable for mistakes and correct them. Do you see evidence that this source corrects or clarifies errors?  
**Tip:** You can do a reverse image search using Google, TinEye and Yandex (among other tools) to see if visuals have been misrepresented or altered in some way.
- 5 Assess news coverage**  
An important step in vetting sources is taking time to read and assess several news articles. Do you see original reporting? Do they provide straight news reports, or just commentary and opinion? Are there grammatical and/or spelling errors? How do news articles from this source compare to coverage from other standards-based newsrooms on this same topic? Many people have strong opinions about news sources without evaluating them firsthand.  
**Tip:** Take note of bylines (names) on news coverage. These bylines can help you confirm that this coverage was written or produced by professional journalists. Bylines are also a sign of transparency and accountability.

**Beware of these trust busters!**  
If you spot any of these problems, look elsewhere for credible news.

- ❗ **False or untrue content:** Publishing a demonstrably false claim without correcting it
- ❗ **Clickbait tactics:** "Baiting" you with sensationalized language, including misleading or exaggerated headlines, or headlines that are purposely vague to drive clicks
- ❗ **Lack of balance:** Consistently focusing on one angle or side of a legitimate debate or controversy, while ignoring or distorting other perspectives
- ❗ **Manipulated images or videos**  
**Tip:** You can do a reverse image search using Google, TinEye and Yandex (among other tools) to see if visuals have been misrepresented or altered in some way.
- ❗ **State-run or state-sponsored propaganda:** Using government-controlled news organizations to further national agendas and improve public image
- ❗ **Dangerous, offensive and malicious content:** Could include discriminatory language, unverified pseudoscience, content that promotes violence or coverage that – as the SPJ Code of Ethics states – panders "to lurid curiosity"

**News Literacy Project** | **SmartNews**

This infographic was created by the News Literacy Project in partnership with SmartNews, a news app for mobile devices.  
For a future founded on facts | newslit.org



# Background: Understanding bias (Infographic)

## Knowledge to develop

### TYPES

Partisan bias

Demographic bias

Corporate bias

Neutrality bias

"Big story" bias

### FORMS

Absence of fairness and balance

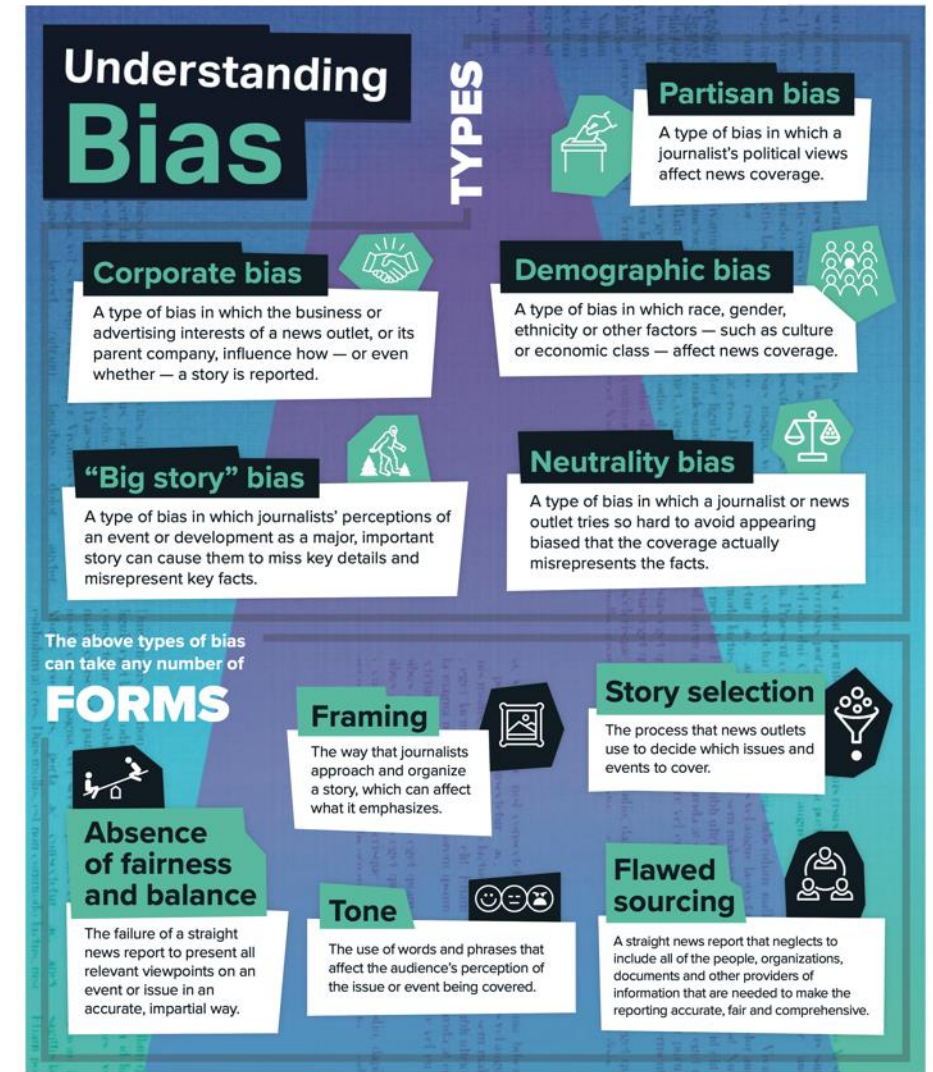
Flawed sourcing

Story selection

Tone

Framing

Note: See next slide for details.



Infographic: <https://newslit.org/tips-tools/understanding-bias/>

# Background: Understanding bias (Text)

## Knowledge to develop

### TYPES

#### **Partisan bias**

A type of bias in which a journalist's political views affect news coverage.

#### **Demographic bias**

A type of bias in which race, gender, ethnicity or other factors — such as culture or economic class — affect news coverage.

#### **Corporate bias**

A type of bias in which the business or advertising interests of a news outlet, or its parent company, influence how — or even whether — a story is reported.

#### **Neutrality bias**

A type of bias in which a journalist or news outlet tries so hard to avoid appearing biased that the coverage actually misrepresents the facts.

#### **"Big story" bias**

A type of bias in which journalists' perceptions of an event or development as a major, important story can cause them to miss key details and misrepresent key facts.

### FORMS

#### **Absence of fairness and balance**

The failure of a straight news report to present all relevant viewpoints on an event or issue in an accurate, impartial way.

#### **Flawed sourcing**

A straight news report that neglects to include all of the people, organizations, documents and other providers of information that are needed to make the reporting accurate, fair and comprehensive.

#### **Story selection**

The process that news outlets use to decide which issues and events to cover.

#### **Tone**

The use of words and phrases that affect the audience's perception of the issue or event being covered.

#### **Framing**

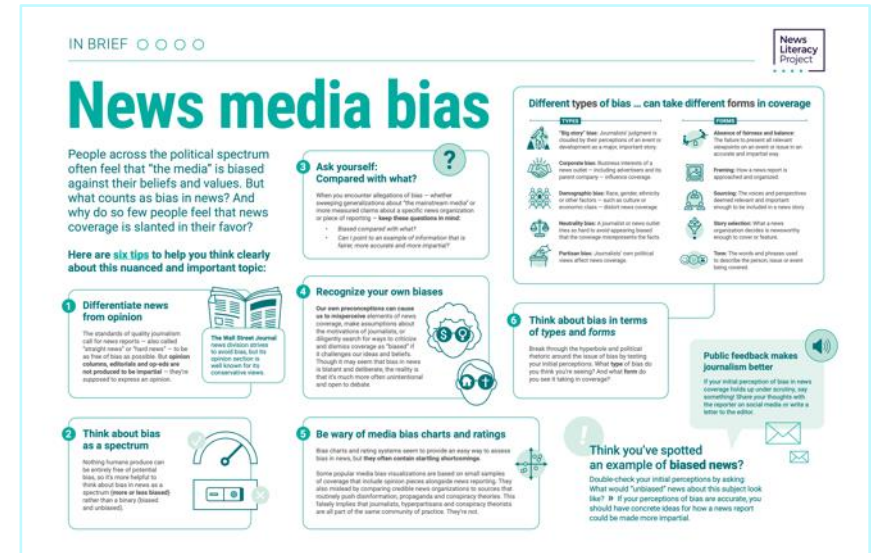
The way that journalists approach and organize a story, which can affect what it emphasizes.

Explained on frame 7 and 16 of [Understanding bias lesson](#)

# Background: News media bias (Infographic)

## Skills to develop

1. **Differentiate news from opinion:** News reports — also called “straight news” or “hard news” — should be as free of bias as possible. But remember that opinion columns, editorials and op-eds are not produced to be impartial. They’re supposed to express an opinion.
2. **Think about bias as a spectrum:** It’s helpful to think about bias in news as a spectrum (more or less biased) rather than a binary (biased and unbiased).
3. **Ask yourself:** Compared with what? When you encounter allegations of bias in news, keep these questions in mind: Biased compared with what? Can I point to an example of information that is fairer, more accurate and more impartial?
4. **Recognize your own biases:** Our own preconceptions can cause us to misperceive elements of news coverage, make assumptions about the motivations of journalists, or diligently search for ways to dismiss coverage as “biased” if it challenges our beliefs.
5. **Be wary of media bias charts and rating:** Bias charts and rating systems seem to provide an easy way to assess bias in news, but they often contain startling shortcomings.
6. **Think about bias in terms of types and forms:** Break through the hyperbole and political rhetoric around the issue of bias by testing your initial perceptions. What type of bias do you think you’re seeing? And what form do you see it taking in coverage?



Infographic:

<https://newslit.org/educators/resources/breaking-news-checklist/>

# More Understanding Journalism resources

## Information Literacy Pack - CommonCraft Videos

- Videos w/ English captions, transcripts and lesson plans (some parts will work for literacy learners) from CommonCraft -  
<https://www.commoncraft.com> →  
<https://www.commoncraft.com/information-literacy-3-pack-videos>
- To see the videos without banners or a paid account use this link:  
<https://sites.google.com/alphaplus.ca/curation/curating-resources/evaluating-with-learners>

## Media Literacy Crash Course - [thecrashcourse.com/topic/medialiteracy](https://thecrashcourse.com/topic/medialiteracy)

- 12 videos on a variety of media literacy topics.
- *At Crash Course, we believe that high quality educational videos should be available to everyone for free. The Crash Course team has produced more than 15 courses to date, and these videos accompany high school and college level classes ranging from the humanities to the sciences. Crash Course transforms the traditional textbook model by presenting information in a fast-paced format, enhancing the learning experience.*





# Contact us for more information and support

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