HOW TO READ THE NEWS
WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO DO MORE THAN JUST SKIM THE HEADLINES

There's more competition than ever for readers. People who publish news need likes, clicks and shares as well as website traffic to make money. The more people who read their news, the more they can charge for advertising.

Newspapers, TV stations and magazines used to compete mainly with each other for readers. However, today they also have to compete with social media for readers. Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook … everyone wants you to click on their posts.

Headlines have become more sensational. They try to grab your attention by sparking a strong emotion (These Adorable Puppies Finally Got What They Needed!) or asking a leading question (What do you think the creator of Flappy Bird is Doing Now?) or implying that you need to click to find out vital information (Top 5 Studying Tips from A+ Students).

It can be tempting–and it's oh-so-easy–to share articles with exciting headlines, often without even reading the post or article. We sometimes assume what the article is about, and since we want our friends to have that information too, we … click.

Think before you share

But control that urge to click and share, because often headlines promise more than the article or post delivers.

We all need to take a thoughtful approach to what we share online. That means first, reading the information behind the headline. Clicking

through to the post to see if what's there lives up to the hype in the headline. More than that, however, it's important to dig deeper. Being a thoughtful news consumer means doing more than just reading and agreeing with the news. It means asking ourselves whether we agree with what is being reported, and thinking about how

we can get more information before we share it with others.

Dig deep into the sources behind the news. If a news video features an "expert," think about who that person is, who is offering you expert advice. What is their experience? Are they the expert they claim to be? It's often worth Googling the people quoted in news articles and posts to see what else they've done or written, and what their qualifications are.
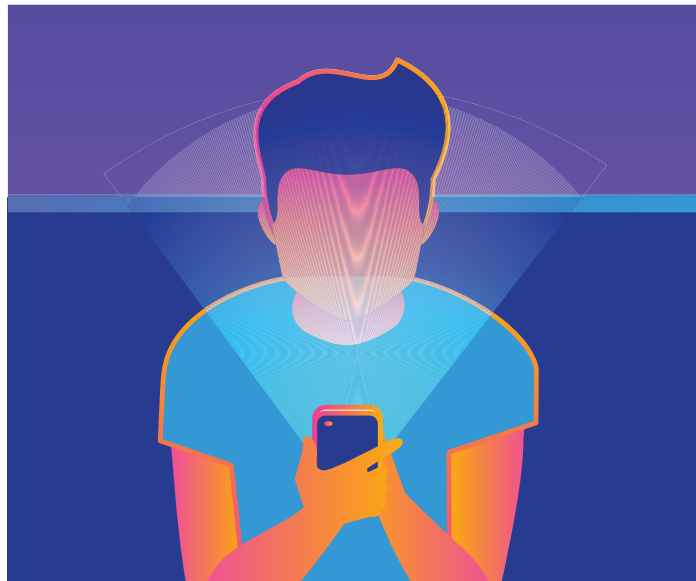
During the pandemic, for instance, we've seen

many sensationalized headlines warning people (falsely) that "wearing a mask can cause your oxygen to decrease." In fact, wearing a mask is an important way to help prevent spreading COVID-19. The so-called "experts" who say you shouldn't wear a mask are likely not experts at all, at least not in science or medicine. By Googling them and digging deeper, you can cut that kind of "fake news" off before it gets a chance to spread.

Critical thinking is key

How can you dig deeper, when you see a post or an article with a sensational headline? First, actually watch the video or read the article, to find out what it's really about. Then, think about whether you agree with the content. Does it align with your point-of-view, the things you've learned in your life? Google the headline or some keywords to see who else has covered the issue, and what they have to say about it.

Try to gather news from lots of different kinds of sources. And think about what points of view seem to be missing. Good reporting covers a variety of sides of an issue, not just one. If the article you're reading only has one point-of-view, it's likely biased. So you definitely need to dig deeper.

Not only will digging deeper into the news you read help you to be a more informed news consumer, it will open up new avenues of information to you. And if you do decide to like or share a post, you can be confident that you've made an informed decision.

THINK ABOUT IT

FILL IN THE BLANKS WITH THESE WORDS FROM THE ARTICLE:

Word Bank: watch, emotion, traffic, dig deeper, source, point-of-view, diverse, biased, headlines

1. Websites can charge more money if they can steer a lot of _____ to their site.

2. A person's experience contributes to their _____; in order to have a well-rounded view of world events, it's important to get news from many _____ sources.

3. Sometimes, news _____ are sensationalized and don't reflect the information in the post or article.

4. Some headlines try to spark a strong _____, which they hope will make you want to click.

5. Before you share a video, at the very least you should _____ it first!

6. It's good to find out who is quoted in an article–who is the _____?

7. If an article has only one point-of-view, it may be _____.

8. To be an informed consumer of news, _____!

DID YOU KNOW?

There are more than 48 million "bots" (automated accounts) on Twitter, according to a 2017 study. That's up to 15 per cent of all Twitter accounts. When you read something on social media, dig deep to make sure that you're not being taken in by a fake account.

CHECK IT OUT

JOURNALISM 101

Lots of news reports quote polls and studies (like our "Did You Know?"). Don't just accept the journalist's interpretation. Find the original study online and read it for yourself. Usually, there's a summary at the top that gives you the basic conclusions. It's worth checking the original source, so you can decide for yourself how you interpret the data.