



Evaluating Science in the News

INTRODUCTION

Reading news articles or websites about science is a great way to learn about new ideas, discoveries, and research. But some sources of information are not as good as others. Before believing information from the news, you need to figure out if that information can be trusted.

This activity will show you how to determine if a source of information is trustworthy. First, you'll answer some questions about a science news article. Then, you'll use your answers to decide whether that article is trustworthy. You can use the methods you learn here for any news articles to help you know what news to trust.

PROCEDURE

1. Pick a news article that involves science, or get an article assigned by your instructor. If you are picking your own article, it can be something that you saw or that a friend or relative mentioned to you. The article could be from a printed source, like a newspaper or magazine, or an online source, like a website or blog.
2. Complete the following table with information about your article. When multiple answers are shown, you can circle, highlight, or bold the correct answers, or you can cross out or delete the incorrect answers.

Article title			
Date published or last updated		Is this date recent enough for your topic? Explain.	
Author of the article		What are the author's credentials/qualifications?	
What is the author trying to do?	Inform Persuade Present an opinion Sell something Entertain	What affiliations or conflicts of interest are mentioned?	
Does the author seem objective (uses facts, not opinions)? Explain.	Yes No	Does the author give references for data or quotations?	
Publisher or sponsor		Is the publisher/sponsor trustworthy? What are their basic values?	

For online articles only:

What domain does the URL use?	<i>Generally trustworthy:</i> .gov .edu		<i>Can be owned by anyone:</i> .com .net .org		
Does the site's name match the URL?	Yes No	Are ads on the website (if any) clearly marked?	Yes No		

3. Read the "Criteria for Evaluating Sources" handout, which has more questions and information to help you decide if your article is trustworthy. You can answer the extra questions or just use them as a reference.
4. Based on all the information you found, is your article trustworthy? Explain your decision using evidence from your tables and the "Criteria for Evaluating Sources" handout.