

PRESENTS

E.S.C.A.P.E. JUNK NEWS

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6 WAYS TO EVALUATE INFORMATION

E

EVIDENCE

DO THE FACTS HOLD UP?

Look for information you can verify.

- Names
- Numbers
- Places
- Documents

S

SOURCE

WHO MADE THIS, AND CAN I TRUST THEM?

Trace who has touched the story.

- Authors
- Publishers
- Funders
- Aggregators
- Social media users

C

CONTEXT

WHAT'S THE BIG PICTURE?

Consider if this is the whole story and weigh other forces surrounding it.

- Current events
- Cultural trends
- Political goals
- Financial pressures

A

AUDIENCE

WHO IS THE INTENDED AUDIENCE?

Look for attempts to appeal to specific groups or types of people.

- Image choices
- Presentation techniques
- Language
- Content

P

PURPOSE

WHY WAS THIS MADE?

Look for clues to the motivation.

- The publisher's mission
- Persuasive language or images
- Moneymaking tactics
- Stated or unstated agendas
- Calls to action

E

EXECUTION

HOW IS THIS INFORMATION PRESENTED?

Consider how the way it's made affects the impact.

- Style
- Grammar
- Tone
- Image choices
- Placement and layout

Name:

Date:

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E → Evidence Do the facts hold up?

Your news story (title):

Choose three important facts from this story. The facts could be the names and roles of key individuals involved, a specific event that took place, a quote, a photograph or any other type of evidence that backs up the story.

Example fact: Fire Station 106 was closed because of a gas leak in the kitchen.

Example fact: Jennifer Smith was the firefighter who first noticed the problem.

Fact 1:

Fact 2:

Fact 3:

Verify these facts. In other words, find another source that independently reported the same fact (not a story that references the story you already have). List the second source that either confirms or contradicts each fact.

Fact 1: **Confirmed?** YES / NO
 Source:

Fact 2: **Confirmed?** YES / NO
 Source:

Fact 3: **Confirmed?** YES / NO
 Source:

Based on this quick investigation, do you think the facts in this story hold up? YES / NO

Explain:

Name:

Date:

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S → Source

Who made this, and can I trust them?

Your news story (title):

Track down the following information for your news story:

1. **The publisher** (The site or organization that provided a space for this story; for example, *The Washington Times*)
2. **The author(s)** (The name(s) and profession(s) of the person or people who wrote it; for example, Sally Hawk, technology reporter)
3. **One source of information within the story** (A person, document or other source for the facts used in the story; for example, Juan Ortiz, a computer science professor, or *Tech Times* magazine survey on app usage)

For each element identified above, answer the following based on your overall impression. Using a scale of 1-10, where 1 is not at all and 10 is very strongly, how much do you trust these sources to provide accurate information about the topic of your news story?

1. **The publisher** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Explain your rating. (For example: I have never heard of this source and the website looks cheap)

2. **The author(s)** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Explain your rating.

3. **The source within the story** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Explain your rating.

Overall, do you think the story is a reliable source of information? YES / NO

Explain:

Name:

Date:

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C → Context What's the big picture?

Your news story (title):

What is the main issue or event in this story?

Find and read two other stories about the same issue or event.

Story 1 **Title:**
 Publication or website:

Story 2 **Title:**
 Publication or website:

For each additional story, answer the following question: Did this story provide any new or different information about the event/issue?

Story 1 YES / NO
 Explain:

Story 2 YES / NO
 Explain:

Based on this quick investigation, do you think this story presents the big picture, or just a piece of the story?

BIG PICTURE / ONLY A PIECE
Explain:

Name:

Date:

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A → Audience

Who is the intended audience?

Your news story (title):

Publication/website:

Look closely at your news story and its publication/website and answer the following questions:

1. What does the **publication/website name** tell you about the intended audience? (For example, *The Washington Post* is intended in part for people living or interested in Washington, D.C.)
2. What does the **text of the story** tell you about the intended audience? (For example, difficult vocabulary or unusual terms might indicate that an article is intended for a well-educated audience.)
3. What does the **other content on the publication/website** tell you about the intended audience? (For example, is there a theme in the stories they publish? Do they often write about specific groups or interests?)
4. Based on your answers above, describe the type or types of individuals that make up the audience for this story:
5. Do you think the intended audience shaped the content of this story? In other words, did the writer or publisher change, omit or twist anything in the story to appeal to a certain group? YES / NO

Explain:

Name:

Date:

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P → Purpose **Why was this made?**

Your news story (title):

Look for the following possible purposes in your news story and explain why you think each one is or is not applicable.

1. Was this story made to **educate or inform** people about an event/issue? (Possible clues: detailed facts and clear sources, complete information about the topic) YES / NO

Explain:

2. Was this story made to **earn money** for the author or publisher? (Possible clues: ads around the story, appeals for money/support) YES / NO

Explain:

3. Was this story made to **influence** how someone feels about this event/issue? (Possible clues: labeled as opinion or perspective, highly emotional language that “tugs the heartstrings,” extreme praise or criticism for key individuals or groups involved in the event or issue) YES / NO

Explain:

Of the three purposes listed above, which do you think is the **main** purpose of this story, and why? (Or, if you think the purpose is something other than the three listed above, explain.)

Based on your answers above about this story’s purpose, do you think the story is credible? YES / NO

Explain:

Name:

Date:

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E → Execution

How is this information presented?

Your news story (title):

On a scale of 1 to 10, where a 1 is very sloppy/poorly done and a 10 is very professional/well done, rate each of the following elements of your story:

1. **Clarity** (the writer's ability to clearly present information)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Explain your rating. (For example: I found this story very confusing.)

2. **Style** (the writer's tone and ability to engage a reader)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Explain your rating. (For example: I found this story very boring.)

3. **Grammar, typos and spelling** (the writer's technical abilities)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Explain your rating. (For example: I found lots of incomplete sentences.)

4. **Layout/format** (the way the story appears)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Explain your rating. (For example: The page is well-organized and easy to read.)

Based on this quick evaluation of the execution, do you think this information is reliable? YES / NO

Explain: