

Steps Students Can Apply to Fact-check Information

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These days, statements of all stripes are bombarding us via broadcast and social media. The trick is classifying them correctly before we swallow them ourselves, much less before we hit "Like," "Share" or "Retweet." And that's the goal of an educational initiative that will be adopted by 10 universities across the country this coming spring.

Thinking like fact-checkers

This new approach seeks to get students thinking like, and doing the work of, fact-checkers.

"We have approached media literacy and news literacy in the past sort of like rhetoricians," says Mike Caulfield, director of blended and networked learning at Washington State University in Vancouver.

Four moves and a habit

Caulfield has distilled this approach into what he calls "Four moves and a habit," in a [free online textbook](#) that he's published. It's aimed at college students, but frankly it's relevant to everyone.

The moves are:

1. **Check for previous work:** Look around to see if someone else has already fact-checked the claim or provided a synthesis of research. [Some places to look: [Wikipedia](#), [Snopes](#), [Politifact](#) and NPR's own [Fact Check](#) website.]
2. **Go upstream to the source:** Most web content is not original. Get to the original source to understand the trustworthiness of the information. Is it a reputable scientific journal? Is there an original news media account from a well-known outlet? If that's not immediately apparent, then move to step 3.
3. **Read laterally:** 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.**
4. **Circle back:** If you get lost, or hit dead ends or find yourself going down a rabbit hole, back up and start over.

Caulfield is also the director of the Digital Polarization Initiative of the [American Association of State Colleges and Universities's](#) [American Democracy Project](#). Starting this spring, the initiative will bring at least 10 universities together to promote web literacy.

Source: [Mindshift](#)