**Name: Partner Name:**

**Handout - Spotting Fake News**

The internet makes finding information on anything incredibly easy for anyone. But it also makes CREATING information -- including information that is heavily biased and/or full of outright lies -- easy, too. There are [hundreds of people making thousands of dollars](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/11/18/this-is-how-the-internets-fake-news-writers-make-money/) by generating fake news stories that go viral whether they are true or not. In fact, fake news stories were [viewed more, shared more and liked more on Facebook during the 2016 Presidential election](https://www.buzzfeed.com/craigsilverman/viral-fake-election-news-outperformed-real-news-on-facebook?utm_term=.clgKXyQwgl&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=News%20-%201117%20Thursday&utm_content=News%20-%201117%20Thursday+CID_b4842d954d8996072e2ffb08fbaf79a9&utm_source=BuzzFeed%20Newsletters#.vqwjNRV3mx) than news stories generated by reliable, professional reporters and sources. And given that [44 percent of ALL Americans report getting news on Facebook](http://www.journalism.org/2016/05/26/news-use-across-social-media-platforms-2016/), that’s a REALLY big deal.

The only way to fight back against fake news is for ordinary readers -- people just like you and me -- to take steps to evaluate the reliability of the sources and stories that we are seeing online. Use this handout -- which details three questions to ask when evaluating online sources -- to practice those skills.

***Question 1 CONTEXT: How Believable is this Story?***

Your common sense is almost always your best tool in spotting fake news stories. If a story doesn’t seem believable to you, it’s a sign that you have to do a little extra research in order to determine if it is a source worth trusting. Let’s practice. Start by exploring these two fake news stories:

[Obama Signs Executive Order Banning the National Anthem at Sporting Events Nationwide](http://abcnews.com.co/obama-signs-executive-order-banning-national-anthem/)

[Obama Signs Executive Order Banning the Pledge of Allegiance in Schools Nationwide](http://abcnews.com.co/obama-executive-order-bans-pledge-of-allegiance-in-schools/)

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| **Question:** | **Your Response:** |
| What makes these fake news stories hard to believe? Why should people with good common sense automatically start to question the reliability of these stories and sources? |  |
| Now, type one of those headlines into Google. Explore the first page of search results. What kinds of results are returned? Can you see any results that confirm that the story/source you are looking at are fake news stories? |  |

***Question 2 CREDIBILITY: What Do I Know about This News Source?***

When trying to spot a fake news story, it’s also important to learn as much as you can about both the source and the author of the story that you are exploring. Let’s practice by studying these fake news websites:

<http://abcnews.com.co/>

<http://cnn.com.de/>

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| **Question:** | **Your Response:** |
| Click on the links above and explore both of these fake news websites. At first glance, do they look like reliable news sources? Why? What makes them believable? |  |
| If you look carefully at the web addresses for both sites, however, you should be able to spot something that just doesn’t look right. What is it about the web addresses that should raise your suspicion? |  |
| Click on several of the stories posted on both sites. What do you notice about the authors of the articles that you are exploring?  Now, Google the name of the author that appears the most frequently: Jimmy Rustling. What do you find in the search results? |  |
| Most websites include “Contact” or “About Us” pages that give readers more information about the source. Find the “Contact” links on the two sources that we are exploring. Does anything on those pages catch your attention or raise your suspicion? |  |

***Question 3 CONSTRUCTION: Can I Spot any Loaded Words or Phrases in the Pieces I am Exploring?***

The key difference between reliable news sources and sources that are worth questioning is reliable news sources stick to reporting facts, allowing readers to form their own opinions about topics. Questionable news sources often push one point of view, intentionally trying to shape how readers feel about a topic. This is often done by using loaded words or phrases in articles. Loaded words and phrases evoke strong emotions in readers or imply a position about the topic being studied. Let’s practice spotting loaded words and phrases.

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| **Question:** | **Your Response:** |
| Now, explore headlines from the Huffington Post -- a left leaning website -- [shared in this document](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1X9VzP8h0C2vX3VTtEmIsUtvm4Duee-b3xCvEqnckBE0/edit?usp=sharing). What loaded words/phrases can you spot? How do you think the author of the article wants readers to feel about the people and events that they are covering? |  |
| In a visual world, loaded images are also used by authors to evoke emotions and/or shape the way that readers feel about particular topics. Go back to the Huffington Post headlines [shared in this document](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1X9VzP8h0C2vX3VTtEmIsUtvm4Duee-b3xCvEqnckBE0/edit?usp=sharing).  Examine the photographs shared. Are they loaded? What would readers think about Donald Trump and Senator Jeff Sessions after looking at these photographs? |  |