

LEARN MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS

HOW TO IDENTIFY  
**MEDIA BIAS**

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# AT A GLANCE

- Bias is when a source favors a point of view. Some biases are unfair.
- Media bias occurs when the opinions of reporters or media outlets affect how they cover the news.
- The least biased media outlets simply report facts.
- Some biases are widespread. Others vary by media outlet.
- The media is necessary for providing voters with information about policies and candidates.
- Media bias can make it more difficult for people to make informed decisions.
- People should evaluate sources for bias before trusting a source's information.



- Readers can evaluate photo choices, story placement, and use of loaded language to spot media bias.
- Confirmation bias is the tendency for people to accept information that confirms what they already believe.
- People should seek information from unbiased sources and sources with different opinions.
- People can combat confirmation bias by finding information that does not support their point of view.

# FINDING RELIABLE INFORMATION

It is important to find reliable information. Readers can do this by finding sources that release unbiased news. Unbiased news sticks to the facts. It does not use loaded language. It is not controlled by the interests of the company that owns the news outlet. The AP is a source that strives to be unbiased. Its thorough and fair reporting has earned the paper fifty-three Pulitzer Prizes. These are awards for outstanding

**It's important to use reliable sources to stay informed about current events.**



Readers who find signs of media bias can also examine the source itself. They can evaluate how the source's bias might have influenced them. Samar Haider is part of a team that is building a media bias detector. He says, "It's not just about detecting bias but understanding how these subtle cues can influence the reader's perception."<sup>10</sup>

## The Media Market

Five media companies control most of the media in the United States. The owners of these companies are wealthy. They donate money to presidential candidates. News stories about these candidates often show a positive bias. The outlets may have a negative bias against the opposing candidates.

## AVOIDING CONFIRMATION BIAS

Everyone experiences confirmation bias. It is human nature. But being aware of this bias can help people avoid it. People can intentionally seek out information that contradicts what they believe. A person in favor of electric cars might explore the opinions of those against electric cars. A person against lowering the voting age to 16 might explore the opinions of those in favor. This exercise might not change a person's opinion. But it will help them become better informed.

Exploring a variety of points of view can also help readers avoid filter bubbles. The algorithms that keep track of a user's search history will see that the user is interested in different opinions. It will deliver

a wider variety of information. This prevents the user from seeing information supporting only one point of view. Larry Atkins teaches journalism. He says,

*Ideally, each of us should reach beyond our own echo chambers and seek news from a variety of media outlets and perspectives. We should be wary of facts and information that we receive from biased sources, and we should verify that information through other reliable sources.<sup>11</sup>*

# FACT-CHECK WEBSITES



AFP Fact Check



FactCheck.org



PolitiFact



Snopes



*Washington Post*  
Fact Checker

People can use fact-checking websites to verify the information they see. These sources are sometimes biased. But looking at multiple fact-checking sites can help people find accurate information.

# GLOSSARY

**conservative**

describing a viewpoint that favors established customs

**credentials**

accomplishments that prove someone has experience or knowledge

**evaluate**

to determine something's value, accuracy, or importance

**generalizations**

statements that use specific pieces of data to falsely claim that something is true all of the time

**hostile**

unfriendly

**ideological**

based on ideas or beliefs

**liberal**

describing a viewpoint that favors social change

**stereotype**

a popular belief that people have of a certain group

**verify**

to determine the accuracy or truth of something

# SOURCE NOTES

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