

Stop

Ask yourself whether you know and trust the website or source of the information. If you don't, use the other moves to get a sense of what you're looking at. Don't read it or share it until you know what it is.

Investigate the source

This doesn't mean you have to do a Pulitzer prize-winning investigation into a source before you engage with it. But taking sixty seconds to figure out where information is coming from before reading will help you decide if it is worth your time, and if it is, help you to better understand its significance and trustworthiness.

Find better coverage

When the initial source you encounter is low quality and you just care about the claim, your best strategy might be to find a better source altogether. Simply type keywords into Google and determine whether the claim is true or false by trying to find reporting by other sources you can confirm are credible.

Trace claims, quotes and media to the original context

Very often, by the time a story finds you on the web, it has been altered so much that it presents a radically wrong version of an event or a piece of research. Usually, the original reporting, research, or photo is available on the web. By going to the original reporting or research source (or finding a high quality secondary source that did the hard work of verification) you can get a story that is more complete, or a research finding that is more accurate.