

News Literacy Script
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SLIDE 1: Title Page.

SLIDE 2: A methodical approach to evaluating news and information: What does it mean to be “news literate” in this age of constant digital connection and amid the deluge of information and pseudo-information news consumers encounter every day?

SLIDE 3: According to the Radio Television Digital News Foundation, news literacy is *the acquisition of 21st-century, critical-thinking skills for analyzing and judging the reliability of news and information, differentiating among facts, opinions and assertions in the media we consume, create and distribute...It is a necessary component for literacy in contemporary society.*”

But it begs a deeper question.

SLIDE 4: Why is it important for people to be able to evaluate news & information? Thomas Jefferson is often quoted as saying: *“The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them.”*

SLIDE 5: Jefferson and the Founders valued free speech and a free press as the highest goods. They believed an unfettered press was necessary to informing citizens and equipping them with the information they would need to make decisions. At that time, Jefferson was most certainly referring to actual literacy – the ability to read.

SLIDE 6: What Jefferson could not have imagined is how dizzying it would become to evaluate news and information when the means of producing news and information was placed in the hands of anyone with a smart phone in the digital age. How can the well-meaning citizen, serious about the civic responsibility to be informed and engaged with the democratic process, know what to think as the line between fact and opinion, between reliable verified information from trusted sources and rumor, between peer-reviewed science and bogus claims, is blurred every day in a thousand ways?

SLIDE 7: An increasing number of people get their news from the Internet – especially via social media like Facebook and Twitter – and the number of digital news “sources” has grown exponentially. So the ability to evaluate and judge the reliability of information is more important than ever. That’s why the Radio Television Digital News Foundation made its first principle of news literacy this: [next slide]

SLIDE 8: Free expression is the foundation — the cornerstone — of democracy.
Free expression is the foundation and cornerstone of democracy. Let's look at the other five principles of news literacy.

SLIDE 9: “Discerning fact from opinion is a basic skill and obligation.”
Almost all newspapers and many magazines have opinion sections and news sections, and these are usually clearly marked. Some newspapers are also now publishing “advertorial” or “sponsored” content/native advertising that may or may not be easily identified as different from the news content. According to the American Press Institute, it's more useful to understand what these different kinds of content *do* than to devise an easy rule for identifying them.

SLIDE 10: “Discerning fact from opinion is a basic skill and obligation.”

Sponsored content, the API says, is content that:

- Takes the same form and qualities of a publisher's original content.
- Makes itself useful or entertaining as a way of favorably influencing the perception of the sponsor brand.”

SLIDE 11: “Discerning fact from opinion is a basic skill and obligation.”
Advertorials, meanwhile, are a bit trickier: These present advertising as editorial content – news, for example – “to convey claims and messages the reader wouldn't otherwise find credible.”

These distinctions become especially blurry when the content takes the form of tweets or other social media messages.

SLIDE 12: What are some of the signals that what the news consumer is encountering is not a fact but an opinion, when statements aren't so clearly labeled? Students can be taught to look for attribution – who says? They can also be taught to look at the source's expertise and proximity to the facts — in short, how credible the source's information is.

SLIDE 13: Does the person have direct knowledge of the situation or the scientific research, for example? People may have the opinion or belief that there is no climate change. But the science is unambiguous and is based on thousands of peer-reviewed studies.

SLIDE 14: As RTDNF expresses in its statement of principles: “People must demand transparency and credibility of information. Readers and viewers must look at information beyond their circle of comfort so they obtain complete and thorough data before acting. These obligations include evaluating what they receive and verifying what they develop on their own.”

SLIDE 15: News organizations have generally moved toward greater transparency in explaining or showing via documents, hyperlinks and other means how reporting was accomplished, whether there are uncertainties or when errors have been made.

SLIDE 16: This allows news consumers to better judge the information or news being reported and decide whether it's evolving or complete, possibly biased because of sources or journalists' relationship to the subject of the reporting, or is in any other way possibly of questionable value.

SLIDE 17: Another challenge of the digital news age is making sense of the massive quantity of information available to the news consumer.

SLIDE 18: According to the Radio Television Digital News Foundation's fourth principle, "journalists must engage in "sense-making" activities, "using the most credible and reliable resources, so audiences can make meaningful use of it, in context, with a minimum need for clarification. In short, journalists must get it *right*. And it must be presented in a relevant, engaging manner without sensationalism, speculation and bias."

SLIDE 19: Citizens, for their part, have a responsibility to try to understand information, rejecting unreliable information and seeking out the important stuff – on their own. Some of the most respected news organizations – like the BBC and the New York Times – as well as some of the newest, like Vox and ProPublica, have developed new ways to help citizens understand complicated issues that are too often reported on episodically. Vox's "card stacks" are a good example of a digital news organization striving to create context.

SLIDE 20: The fifth principle of news literacy focuses on verification – the importance of journalists using reliable sources and checking out the truth of what they say in an independent but engaged frame of mind. Because the answers matter. Citizens and communities, meanwhile, are obliged to take care in accepting information. This means having a critical, analytical mindset about information — not swallowing "information" hook, line and sinker. You could call this healthy skepticism.

SLIDE 21: The final principle of news literacy focuses on giving people a voice – especially people who are often ignored. People with power and influence are often given a voice as decision-makers in matters that more directly affect others. Journalists are obliged to capture the voices of people affected by events and share them with their communities, especially when those voices belong to the marginalized. These people are among the "stakeholders."

SLIDE 22: These are the basic principles of news literacy, and they can be taught to students of almost any age across curriculum. Be sure to look at the list of additional resources for tips on how to teach news literacy.

SLIDE 23: Contact Information page.

