The League of Women Voters is a grassroots, peoples' organization that has fought since 1920 to improve our government and engage all Americans in the decisions that impact their lives.

Formed from the movement that secured a woman's right to vote, the League continues to advocate for expanded voter participation so that every American voice will be heard.

Education is at the core of this advocacy.

✓ **"Education" involves sharing information that is reliable and trustworthy.** This module will help you find tools to sift through all the messages out there and become better prepared to figure out **what is FACT and what is FICTION.**

"Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy"

LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. We are not for women only—all individuals 16 years and older are welcome.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh is a nonprofit 501 (C)(3) organization and is nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties.
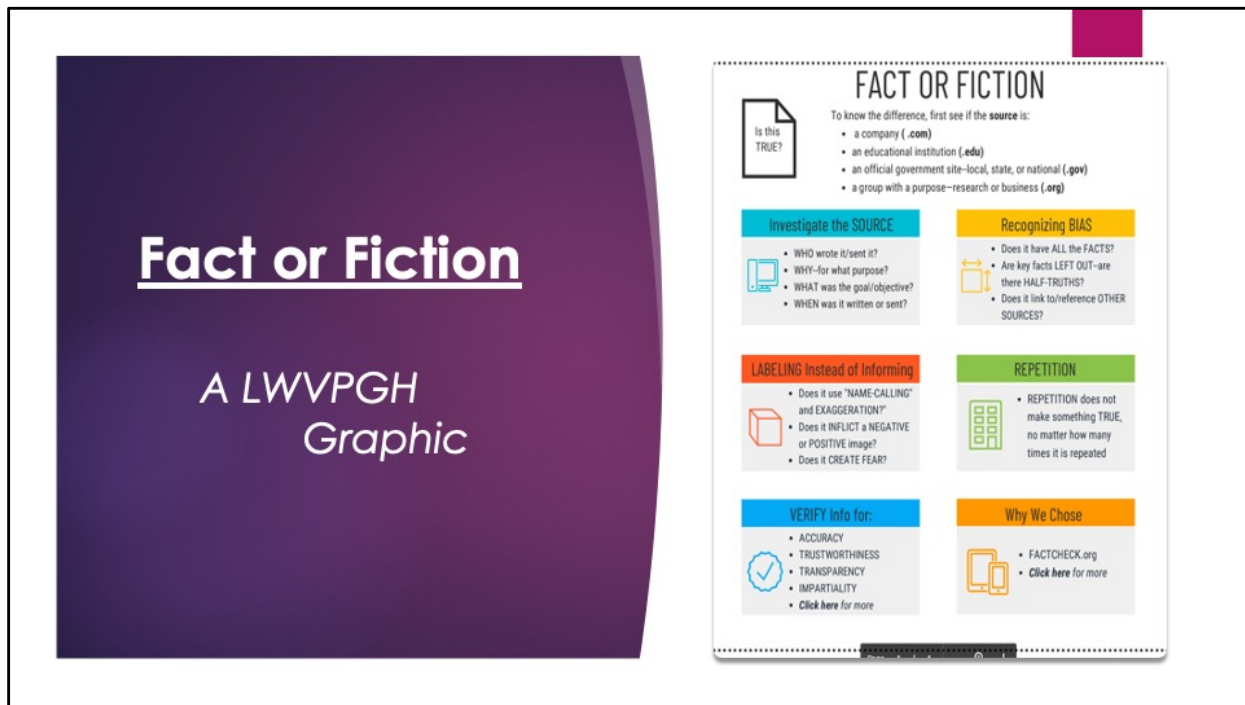
This League of Women Voters graphic provides tools for recognizing mis- and disinformation. *See Fact or Fiction .*

Step 1- Investigate the SOURCE: the **"dot"** part of the web address can help to determine what type of entity published the information.

Step 2- Recognize Bias: "bias" is defined as a "prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group, compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair."

Step 3- Labeling: pay attention to the use of **labels** that attempt to substitute name-calling for informing or providing information.

Step 4- Repetition: *over, and over, and over again,* does not make something true. It is a way used to amplify statements that may be false.

Step 5- Verify!: take the time to check multiple sources for agreement.

Step 6- Reliable Websites: a few websites you can trust.

Resources for Civics
Here are even more resources. We believe this comprehensive list is one you can depend on as reliable and trustworthy.

From iCivics:
"Newsfeed Defenders" Lesson:

3

▶ **"Newsfeed Defenders" Lesson:** To Recognize Mis-or Disinformation When You See it, Look for these **Four Qualities**:

✓ Accuracy
✓ Transparency
✓ Trustworthiness
✓ Impartiality

Source: iCivics "NewsFeed Defenders" Lesson and PowerPoint from **iCivics website**

Source: *iCivics "NewsFeed Defenders" Lesson and PowerPoint* from the iCivics website, *are the sources for the slides that follow.*

- ✓ **ACCURACY** News stories should provide accurate and verifiable information. Sources should be credited and cited. Beware of quotes without attributions, facts you can't verify with a quick internet search, and claims that have no proof.
- ✓ **TRANSPARENCY** Content must clearly communicate its purpose, especially when it's not a news article. Don't be fooled by sneaky ads, quizzes that just mine for your personal information, or opinion pieces pretending to be fair and balanced reporting.
- ✓ **TRUSTWORTHINESS** It's important to know the source of what you read. Make sure the source is legitimate, whether a reliable network or expert. Deception can come in many forms. False sources, experts, and even institutions can be used to gain your trust.
- ✓ **IMPARTIALITY** News stories should not show bias in the coverage of an event or topic. If there are multiple sides to a story, they should be provided. Only telling one side of a story is one way people try to mislead. Good opinion pieces give you both sides, then argue for one or the other.

✓ Bots are **algorithms** (computer code) acting in social media networks. *But to us, they look like real users with names, photos, and followers.*

✓ They are programmed to like, follow, and comment on our posts as if they were real people.

✓ Bots can be designed to **carry on chat** conversations and engage with us without our knowing that their comments are computer generated.

✓ They also can be used to **follow your actions online**, and suggest things (products, services, content) based on your behaviors.

Beware of the "BOTS"

How might this impact what you see on Social Media?

*How might the abundance of **"bots"** impact what you see on Social Media?*

When Bots Attack: Fake Fame

▶ You can buy followers, rather than work to earn them. One young entrepreneur purchased 50,000 Twitter followers to make his young social media consulting company look like it was famous and successful.

▶ It won him some additional attention and even some business because people believed he had a large and influential following.

▶ Most of the followers were bots and faded away after his purchase expired. He had to then explain his new "unpopularity" to clients. It's also a federal offense in his field.

It is easy to be fooled. This information will help you identify **"Fake Fame".**

When Bots Attack: The OPINION Armies

✓ Armies of bots can be coded to read and **engage with Social Media content on a particular topic** like an upcoming election, or climate change, or other important issues.

✓ Pushing these armies to support or oppose something or someone **in big enough numbers can change** what is considered **"trending".** And things that are trending (even if untrue) are considered newsworthy and can get picked up by other media outlets.

✓ **Bully bots** can be used to get into online confrontations, stirring up anger and contention between groups holding different opinions on an issue--even when one side is just computer code!

✓ **"Bots allow groups to speak much more loudly** than they would be able to on any other social media platform — it lets them use Twitter as a megaphone," said Samuel Woolley, the director for research at Oxford University's Computational Propaganda Project. "It's doing something that I call **'manufacturing consensus,'** or building the illusion of popularity for a candidate or a particular idea."

✓ **Opinions** should be generated from *individual human minds* to truly be "opinions".

✓ You can turn down the volume on content that may falsely build popularity for an idea or a person with this information.

The Most Important Question:

When Bots Attack:
How to Spot a Bot

- ▶ **Bots are lonely.** Usually, they will have few "friends" on the Social Media platform.

- ▶ **They post A LOT.** If you see a regular timed series of posts over a long period of time, or a huge burst of posts it may be a bot. *Humans have to sleep!*

- ▶ They use **hash tags** heavily to increase the likelihood their posts will be seen.

- ▶ They use **"spam words"** that work to get you to click on links within a post. (ex: deals, debt, dating)

- ▶ *They have a blacklisted (hidden) URL.*

What to do when **Bots ATTACK**!

✓ Spot that BOT!

MIRROR SITES: *What to Look For*

It's not very hard to make your own website.

It's also not very hard to make a **mirror version** of legitimate news websites and **post deceptive and false content.**

At first glance, these fake sites **look and feel very much like the real thing**—from the design to the font to the layout. *Even the URL is nearly the same.* (Swap a l for a 1. or swap .com for a .net)

These **imposter stories and pages** are spread just as easily on Social Media, where many readers **fail to check the details before reposting.**

These clues help you recognize the difference between a **real website** and a false one.

Mirror Sites:

What to Do

► **Match the URL to the name of the site** (Don't be fooled by everything below the address line- like similar formatting and banner)

► **In a second tab, pull up the site** using the **correct URL** and try to find the same story there.

► If there is an image, **do a reverse image search.** Fakers will use stock photos and pretend they are real people.

► **The links should take you somewhere else.** Click on the comments, an ad, or link within the article. *If you end up getting taken back to the same place, it is a red flag.*

With these clues you can recognize **Mirror Sites** so that**:**

✓ You will know a false site when you see one, and

✓ possibly avoid a *"phishing" scam or lower your chances of getting hacked by individuals who may be trying to steal your personal information.

__"Phishing":__ the fraudulent practice of sending emails that are supposed to be from reputable companies in order to get individuals to reveal personal information, such as passwords and credit card numbers.*

> **Misinformation Directory** from **FactCheck.org**

> **Critical Thinking Resources** from **Annenberg Classroom**

MORE RESOURCES
for Media Literacy

Follow-up with these reliable resources.

✓ **Misinformation Directory** from **FactCheck.org**

✓ **Critical Thinking Resources** from **Annenberg Classroom**

Source:
iCivics "NewsFeed Defenders" Lesson and PowerPoint from the iCivics website .

- ✓ See more at the League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh website: www.lwvpgh.org**.**

- ✓ View more **Independent Learning Modules** here .

Contact us at: Civic.education@lwvpgh.org .