



Introducing NewsGuard, a Media Literacy and Research Tool

A Guide for Students

Guide Outline

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What is NewsGuard?

NewsGuard helps people build media literacy skills, avoid misinformation, and conduct online research with confidence. NewsGuard's trained journalists rate and review thousands of news and information websites to help users know which sites they can generally trust – and which might be trying to deceive them. These ratings can be accessed from NewsGuard's desktop browser extension or mobile apps.

How does NewsGuard review websites?

Each site is rated using nine standards of credibility and transparency. Based on how the site fares on the nine criteria, it receives a score out of 100, which corresponds to an overall Red rating (for sites receiving fewer than 60 points) or Green rating (for sites receiving 60 or more). Each site also receives a full "Nutrition Label" review that explains each rating and discusses the site's ownership, financing, content,

NewsGuard's nine criteria: CREDIBILITY

- Does not repeatedly publish false content
- Gathers and presents information responsibly
- Regularly corrects or clarifies errors
- Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly
- Avoids deceptive headlines

TRANSPARENCY

- Discloses ownership and financing
- Clearly labels advertising
- Reveals who's in charge, including possible conflicts of interest
- Provides the names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information

credibility, transparency, and history. Read a Nutrition Label and you can see exactly how and why NewsGuard rated a site the way it did.

When and how should I use NewsGuard?

NewsGuard's ratings can be helpful any time you are browsing online, but they are particularly useful for...

- Scrolling through social media (like Twitter and Facebook)
- Using a search engine (like Google or Bing)
- Conducting online research for a paper or project

These ratings and Nutrition Label reviews can help you understand whether a site is highly trustworthy, whether it has some issues, or whether it is completely unreliable. But ultimately, you should always assess each site for yourself, thinking critically about how much to trust it.



Red: A website is rated red if it generally fails to meet basic standards of credibility and transparency.



Green: A website is rated green if it generally adheres to basic standards of credibility and transparency.

THE BROWSER EXTENSION

Installing the NewsGuard browser extension

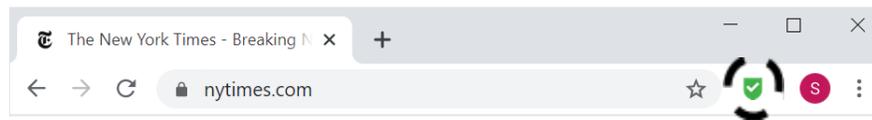
If you haven't yet, install the extension for Chrome, Edge, Firefox, or Safari by following the link for your browser. For more detailed installation instructions, consult the [NewsGuard School Installation Guide](#).

- Google Chrome: <http://bit.ly/2mMUEKj>
- Microsoft Edge: <http://bit.ly/2NOASX6>
- Mozilla Firefox: <http://mzl.la/2x4rE5w>
- Apple Safari: <https://apple.co/2pPR8jJ>

What you will see

Once you install NewsGuard's browser extension, NewsGuard rating icons will begin to appear next to links on search engines and social media feeds, including

Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Bing. Ratings also appear in the upper-right corner of websites rated by NewsGuard, next to the URL bar.



Interacting with the extension

1. NewsGuard ratings will appear next to website links on social media or search results.
2. Hover over each icon to see a brief description of the site and why it received its rating.
3. To see the full rating of each website, click, “See the full Nutrition Label.” Each Nutrition Label describes the website’s background, ownership, and why it received its rating—including its performance on each of the nine criteria:

THE NEWSGUARD ICONS



A site with a **red** badge lacks credibility or transparency in important areas and should generally not be trusted as the primary source of information. Users should always independently verify information on **red** sites, and if they feel there is a compelling case for citing a **red** site, they should be able to clearly articulate why.



A site with a **green** badge can generally be trusted, but not all sites rated **green** are equal. A **green** site may still lack credibility or transparency in certain key areas. Users should read the full Nutrition Label to understand any shortcomings of the site that might impact whether they should trust its information.



A website intended to entertain. Unlike a false news website that is intentionally deceiving, a satirical website is upfront about its nature, or widely known to be a parody. A common example is The Onion. Much like a **red** website, an **orange** website should typically not be consulted as the primary source of information, unless there is a compelling reason for citing it.



A platform, such as Wikipedia or YouTube, where users produce content that might not be edited or vetted for accuracy. Readers should independently verify information on the platform using reputable sources.



When a white badge appears next to the URL bar of a website, or no badge appears next to a link on social media or in search results, it indicates that NewsGuard has not rated the site and does not plan to rate it soon. This does not mean that it isn't a reliable source; it likely means that the website is not a typical news website, or that it does not have a large enough reach for NewsGuard to consider rating it.

NEWSGUARD'S NINE CRITERIA

CREDIBILITY

False Content

Does the site repeatedly publish false content? While many websites occasionally make mistakes, sites that do not promptly correct those errors may be trying to misinform readers. False stories can range from political conspiracy theories to health myths.

Gathering & Presenting

Does the site gather and present information responsibly? *Gathering* information responsibly involves referencing multiple sources, preferably those that present firsthand information on a subject. *Presenting* information responsibly means providing a balanced, fair account of events – not misstating

facts, misquoting sources, or distorting information by only including certain facts while leaving out other key details.

Corrections **Does the site regularly correct errors?** Even the most reliable news organizations sometimes make mistakes, but credible news outlets should have a policy for routinely correcting their errors and transparently communicating those corrections to readers – such as by adding a “correction” notice or “editor’s note” to stories.

News vs. Opinion **Does the site handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly?** Some websites only publish opinion stories, and others only publish news reports, but many sites publish a mixture of both. Credible news outlets should make it clear to their readers which stories contain commentary – such as by labeling them “opinion” or publishing them in an opinion section. If a website approaches its reporting from a certain point of view, it should clearly disclose its perspective to readers.

Deceptive Headlines **Does the site avoid publishing deceptive headlines?** A headline tells a reader what is in the story before he or she decides to read it. Some websites use exaggerated headlines that distort the facts in a story to entice people into clicking and reading an article. Deceptive headlines are dangerous because people may only skim headlines they encounter online, and not take the time to read the articles.

TRANSPARENCY

Ownership & Financing **Does the site disclose its ownership and financing?** News organizations may be owned by an individual, a private company, a nonprofit organization, or a government. Transparent sites should clearly tell readers who owns the site and where its money is coming from – especially if the owners or funders have political or ideological motivations.

Advertising **Does the site clearly label advertising?** Sometimes companies will pay to have articles written about them or pay to run ads that look like stories. Transparent sites should make it clear to the reader what content is paid for, and what is independent editorial content.

Who’s in Charge **Does the site reveal who’s in charge?** Sites should clearly identify those in charge of making decisions about reporting and coverage – such as their editor(s) or publisher(s) – so that they can be held accountable for content on their site.

Content Creators

Does the site identify its content creators? Stories should be attributed to an author, using their real name. The site should also provide contact information for its content creators, so readers can ask questions and make complaints, and bios revealing their backgrounds and any conflicts of interest with what they report.

Reading a Nutrition Label

- **Ownership and Financing:** Names a site's owner and describes how it is financed.
- **Content:** Describes the type of stories, videos, and other information that a reader will encounter on a site. Also explains if the site reflects an ideology.
- **Credibility:** Illustrates whether a site's reporting is credible, and explains why it may have received a **red X** for any credibility criteria.
- **Transparency:** Describes how much information a site provides about itself, and explains why it may have received a **red X** for any transparency criteria.
- **History:** Provides context for how long a website has been around, why it was started, and what changes it may have undergone over the years.
- **Sources:** Contains a full list of sources, organized by section, to support each fact stated in the Nutrition Label. Users can consult the source list to verify statements made in the label.
- **Authors:** Each label names the analysts and editors that reviewed that website, providing their bio and email address for anyone with questions or concerns.

eonline.com

The online extension of E!, a 24-hour cable TV entertainment news channel, produced by E! Entertainment Television, which covers entertainment news.

Ownership and Financing	The site is owned by NBCUniversal Inc., one of the world's largest telecommunications companies.
Content	Eonline.com publishes stories, photos, and entertainment news, as well as content from television shows like "Keeping up with the Kardashians" for coverage of celebrity events and award shows, photo galleries and fashion reviews posts. It has sections on red carpet events, original film news, and celebrity lifestyles, including fitness. A livestream of the cable TV channel is available to subscribers.
Credibility	Text and video stories are produced by staff reporters who quote unnamed sources. It has also relied on second-hand reports, along with sites like TMZ that often report without much elaboration. Headlines speak in tabloid gossip style: "Up for a Selfie at Colosseum in Rome," "Celebrate at Baby Shower with Kim Kardashian."
Transparency	The site does not provide information about its authors. Biographies can be found on the NBCUniversal website. Comments at the end of each news story include a feedback link, but does not make clear who the editors are. Editors at Eonline.com and representatives at NBCUniversal are available for contact.

Misinformation & Media Literacy Vocabulary

Common terms to help you understand NewsGuard's Nutrition Labels

- **Agenda:** (noun) An often-secretive plan to achieve specific goals that may be political or ideological in nature.
- **Anecdotal:** (adjective) Based on personal experiences or observations, rather than on facts or research, often implying unreliability.
- **Biography/Biographical Information:** (noun) Details that describe someone's background, such as their previous jobs or where they went to college.
- **Cherry Pick:** (verb) To pick and choose information or things, only selecting what is considered favorable or appealing. Sources that cherry pick might only select stories or details that advance a particular perspective and/or agenda, while choosing not to publish content that does not support that perspective and/or agenda.
- **Cite:** (verb) To refer to evidence or information, such as a quote from a public official or information from a government document.
- **Claim:** (noun) A statement or assertion, often made without evidence. (verb) To make a statement or assertion, often without evidence.
- **Conflict of Interest:** (noun) A situation in which an individual or organization has motivations, which are often hidden, that prevent them from carrying out a responsibility fairly. Example: If someone was supposed to write a movie review about a movie their best friend made, that would be a conflict of interest.
- **Conspiracy Theory:** (noun) A belief, often involving powerful people or organizations operating in secrecy, that attempts to explain a circumstance or event and is likely false.
- **Credibility:** (noun) A quality of being believable and reliable.
- **Credible:** (adjective) Something or someone that is trustworthy.
- **Criteria:** (noun) A set of standards used to judge something.

- **Deceptive:** (adjective) Causing someone to believe something that is untrue.
- **Disclose:** (verb) To reveal or tell something, especially something that was previously unknown or a secret.
- **Disinformation:** (noun) Information that is false and deliberately created to mislead or harm a person, social group, organization, or country.
- **Distort:** (verb) To change something so that it is different from its original form. Distorting words or speech makes them take on a different meaning than what was originally said.
- **Editorial:** (noun) An article written on behalf of a publication's editors or publishers that expresses an opinion. (adjective) Related to a publication's content.
- **Editorialize:** (verb) To insert opinion into a report that is supposed to be factual.
- **Evaluate:** (verb) To review for quality or significance.
- **Financing:** (noun) Money that a business, government, organization, or individual uses to do something, and the source of that money.
- **Headline:** (noun) The title of an article or other piece of content that describes what it is about. It typically appears at the beginning, written in a large font.
- **Journalist:** (noun) A person who reports nonfiction content about what is going on in the world, typically for a mass audience.
- **Journalism:** (noun) The production and distribution of nonfiction content about world events, typically for a mass audience.
- **Journalistic ethics:** (noun) The standards responsible journalists follow when reporting, to ensure fairness and honesty. Example: A journalistic ethic is to avoid conflicts of interest with the stories someone reports.
- **Misinformation:** (noun) Information that is false, but not created with the intention of misleading or causing harm.

- **Motivation:** (noun) A reason for acting a certain way.
- **News:** (noun) A factual report of new, noteworthy information.
- **Objective:** (adjective) Remaining fair and impartial, not being influenced by personal judgments, feelings, or opinions when working with facts.
- **Opinion:** (noun) A view or judgment about a particular topic.
- **Hard/Straight News:** (noun) A factual report of new, noteworthy information that does not contain opinion or exaggeration.
- **Transparent:** (adjective) Clear, accessible, and easily understood, such as about business or journalistic practices.
- **Transparency:** (noun) The act of making information clear, accessible, and easily understood, such as that relating to business or journalistic practices.
- **Violate:** (verb) To break or fail to comply with a rule, standard, or agreement.