



How to Rate Veracity

Once you have rated an article for Expression, then you can rate an article for Veracity, which is otherwise known as “truth.”

We need to start by admitting that rating Veracity is hard, and that even with our best efforts, we still might not know, AND we might get it wrong.

Why is that? Well, a couple of reasons. Let’s step back a bit. A lot of people use the terms “facts” and “truth” interchangeably, but they are not quite the same thing. The term “fact” is more appropriate to refer to things that can be objectively proven, independently of any person’s belief in them. These are things like the who, what, when, where, of a story, like “the Rockies won 7-2 yesterday,” or “it rained here today.”

The term “truth” is more appropriate for what people believe about facts. Truth is a squishier concept, because different people can take the same facts and believe different “truths” about them, which are informed by their own experiences, morality, religious beliefs, and so forth.

But people use these terms interchangeably because facts and truth are related and close concepts. Don’t get too hung up on that part.

What we are rating in the Veracity metric is how factual an article is, and how true we think those facts are. So let’s rate how factual articles are. This is hard for another reason, which is that you, personally, can almost never verify, yourself, whether a fact you read is actually true! That’s because none of us individually can go and verify absolutely everything that happened in every single article we read. We are not, ourselves, in a position to fact-check everything.

It is precisely because it is hard that people rely on the Media Bias Chart as a shortcut. And we certainly do our best to help people sort out what is more factual and true and what is less factual and true. But it’s important for you to be able to distinguish for yourself what is most likely factual and true and what is not.

We rate Veracity on the following five-point scale. On your screen, the Veracity slider is divided into five sections, which will help you correlate the Veracity 1-5 scale to a corresponding ranking on the chart.

Here is the veracity scale, with 1 at the top of the slider and 5 at the bottom.

Veracity:

- 1-True (Easily provable and widely accepted)
- 2-Mostly True (Mostly provable and mostly accepted)
- 3-Neither True nor False (Neither provable nor disprovable; subject to debate)
- 4-Mostly False (Mostly disprovable and the facts disproving are mostly accepted)
- 5-False (Easily disprovable and the facts disproving are widely accepted)

So how do we determine Veracity? We rely on the media ecosystem. One benefit of having many journalism outlets in this country is that we can rely on them to provide a check on each other—usually if one outlet gets something wrong, other sources will tell you about it.

Therefore, you can usually determine the Veracity of something you read to a reasonable degree of certainty after reading other articles on the same topic.

There are some things that you probably don't have to question or try to verify through other sources; for example, reports of things that sound uncontroversial like the weather or an expected event. However, in other cases you will have reason to suspect that something you read might not be true. For example, you should be suspicious of something that sounds so controversial, or so damaging to one political party or another that if it were true, many sources would likely be reporting on it, but you discover they are not.

Fact-checking itself can be a big undertaking, and there are thorough methodologies outside of this program that you can apply to do robust fact checking. But here, you need to determine Veracity relatively quickly to rate articles in this program and in life. To quickly and reasonably determine Veracity for the purposes of rating it according to our methodology, the best two things you can do are the following:

- 1) Google search the exact fact you are questioning (or if you are questioning the veracity of an image, do a google reverse image search)
- 2) Read the other articles in the assignment about the same topic

If you feel like you can rate the Veracity of an article with a *reasonable* degree of certainty, then do so. Reasonable doesn't mean 100% certain—just mostly certain given your resources. If you absolutely have no idea if something is true or not, you do not have to rate Veracity, and you can leave the slider in its original place. In such cases, you can rate reliability solely on Expression and Headline/Graphic.