Finding Credible News
Essential Question

How do we find credible information on the Internet?
Learning Objectives

1. Learn reasons that people put false or misleading information on the Internet.

2. Learn criteria for differentiating fake news from credible news.

3. Practice evaluating the credibility of information they find on the Internet.
Corn is a dangerous fruit that grows on a corn tree. It is arguably the deadlest fruit on Earth, but many are unaware and gulp it down each year. The fruit itself comprises the following parts:

- A hard core made of dense organic matter. It is inedible. I have tried. However, dogs regard it as equivalent to meat.

"That's a buccaneer!"
~ Oscar Wilde on food-price inflation
Credible

Able to be believed; trustworthy
Why might information you find on the Internet not be true?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Editorials</strong></th>
<th><strong>Satire</strong></th>
<th><strong>Hoaxes</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles or blogs that are meant to persuade the reader of the author's opinion and which may include bias or leave out important facts</td>
<td>Websites or articles that are meant to be funny by making fun of a subject and which often include statements that are untrue</td>
<td>Articles that are meant to fool the reader into believing something that isn't true by trying to be as realistic as possible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluate

To carefully examine something to figure out its value
Bias

Having preference for one thing over another in a way that’s unfair
Corroboration

An additional source that confirms or supports a news story, article, or piece of information
ACTIVITY: NEWS OR FAKE NEWS?

How credible is it?

**Fake News**
- Information is very surprising—even unbelievable.
- Website is biased or is not part of a credible news, academic, or governmental organization.
- Author's bio or previous articles show a bias on the issue.
- Key points cannot be corroborated by other credible sites.

**Questionable**
- Information may be surprising but is not unbelievable.
- Website is not part of a credible news, academic, or governmental organization.
- Author's bio or previous articles may show bias, or the article is an editorial or opinion piece.
- Most key points can be corroborated.

**Credible News**
- Information may or may not be surprising but makes sense.
- Website is part of a credible news, academic, or governmental organization.
- Author has no clear bias on the issue, and article is not an editorial or opinion piece.
- All key points can be corroborated by other credible sites.
We are critical thinkers & creators.
Directions
Use the checklist below to evaluate the credibility of information you find online.

Internet Investigator Checklist

✓ Read closely. Does it make sense? Is it believable?
   Identify the main idea by analyzing the text features and webpage and by reading the text.
   Take note of anything that is surprising or hard to believe or that gives you a strong emotional reaction.

✓ Analyze the source. Does it come from a credible, unbiased source?
   Find out information about the site owner and author by exploring the site and searching the web.

✓ Look for corroboration. Do other credible sources say the same thing?
   See if the main idea and key points of the article are also reported by other credible sites.

Example
1. The case for allowing 16-year-olds to vote

How credible is it? (Circle one.)
Fake news ✗   Questionable ✗   Credible news ✓

Explain your answer:
## News or Fake News?

<table>
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<th>Example</th>
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<th>Look for corroboration</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Top Ten Reasons to Lower the Voting Age</strong></td>
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How credible is it? (Circle one.)

- Fake news 🔴
- Questionable 🔄
- Credible news 🌈

**Explain your answer:**

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- Questionable 🔄
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**Explain your answer:**

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The case for allowing 16-year-olds to vote

A measure in San Francisco proposes lowering the voting age to 16. Should other cites do the same?

By Zachary Crockett @zzcrockett zachary.crockett@ vox.com Nov 7, 2016, 9:00am EST

Two years ago on election night, Oliver York, then a 15-year-old sophomore at Lick-Wilmerding High School in San Francisco, sat at home brooding.

"More than half of all the San Francisco ballot measures directly affected young people like me," he recalls. "But we had no say."

York decided to try to change that.

He solicited the help of San Francisco Youth Commission, a body of young leaders who advise city officials on youth issues. He organized meetings with the city school board, local officials, and state senators. And by January 2015, he'd launched a full-fledged campaign to fight for youth voter rights.

Two years later, York's efforts have resulted in Proposition F — an initiative that calls to lower the voting age to 16 for local elections. It's been endorsed by the likes of Congress member Nancy Pelosi, state Sen. Mark Leno, and the San Francisco School Board, and a recent poll indicated it has earned the support of 49 percent of voters. (It needs 51 percent to win.)

If the bill passes, it will make San Francisco the first major city in the United States to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local elections. And chances are, it would increase civic engagement among a demographic that is fully capable of choosing who ought to represent them.

Youth voter turnout is at an all-time low

Before we touch on the rationale of lowering the voting age to 16 for local elections, it is important to step back and take a look at the current climate of civic engagement among young voters in the United States.

The 2014 midterm election saw the lowest turnout rate ever recorded: a mere 19.9 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds voted. Even worse, only 46.7 percent of these voters registered — the lowest figure since the 26th Amendment was passed in 1971, lowering the voting age from 21 to 18.
Local elections tell a similar story. In an analysis of Gallup data from 26 major US cities, Aaron Weinschenk, a professor at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay, found that local election turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds is half that of voters ages 25 and older. (Note: This data was self-reported and, as such, is likely inflated — but it’s the best local election data on youth voters available.)

Hundreds of studies have offered explanations for why youth voter turnout is flailing, and scholars have proposed many temporary or long-term solutions to boost civic engagement, ranging from making voting registration easier to offering more preregistration programs.

Lowering local election voting age to 16 in major cities, in conjunction with the integration of civics classes in school, has been gaining support as a tenable way to boost turnout.

Here’s why.

16-year-olds are mature enough to make informed decisions

In America, 16-year-olds work without limits on their hours and pay income tax on their earnings. They drive motor vehicles. When they commit crimes, they are tried as adults in our court system. Yet, when it comes to allowing them to vote in local elections, we draw the line.

The main argument against allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote is that they are not mentally developed enough — that their brains are still developing and they do not perform as well as older adults in impulse-driven situations, where emotions run high.

In addressing what motivates decision making, social psychologists identify two drivers: “hot” cognition, and “cold” cognition. Choices motivated by hot cognition are entirely emotional in nature; there is little reasoning or rationality involved. Cold cognition, in contrast, is independent of emotional involvement. Voting, in its ideal form, should be a cold cognition task: We would hope our voters are able to make decisions based on facts and evidence rather than emotion.

Philip Zelazo, a professor at the University of Minnesota’s Institute of Child Development, had people of varying ages perform two tasks that measure executive function abilities — the Eriksen Flanker Task and the Dimensional Change Card Sort. His research suggests that by age 16, cold cognition skills are near fully developed.
“Executive function skills are the brain-based attentional skills required for goal-directed problem solving [like voting],” says Zelazo.

While these skills generally continue to improve until the mid-20s, the biggest leap occurs from age 10 to 12. As Zelazo’s research shows, the ability to make informed decisions is formed well before the age of 18.

Further research has shown that 16-year-olds “possess the same level of civic knowledge as older young adults” (those ages 18 to 25). While their knowledge is not up to par with that of, say, a 40-year-old voter, there is no statistical discrepancy between them and 18-year-old voters who already have the right to vote.

**16-year-olds are eager to get civically involved**

Though Proposition F would make San Francisco the first major US city to lower the voting age to 16, two much smaller municipalities in Maryland have already adopted such measures. In these locales, 16- and 17-year-olds are voting at rates nearly quadruple those of older voters.

In 2013, Takoma Park — a small, progressive enclave in a suburb of Washington, DC — became the first city in the US to lower its local election voting age to 16. Two years later, nearby Hyattsville followed suit. “We have many 16- and 17-year-olds in our community who care deeply about this place,” council member Tim Male, who initiated the measure, told the Washington Post.
The data proves that to be true: In Takoma Park, the turnout rate for 16- and 17-year-olds not only exceeded that of every other demographic in the city’s 2013 and 2015 elections, but nearly quadrupled the overall average:

Further data can be drawn upon outside of the United States.

Internationally, at least 20 countries allow citizens under the age of 18 to vote. In Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, and Nicaragua, 16-year-olds regularly contribute to the electoral process. In Greece and Indonesia, 17-year-olds can vote in national elections, and in Israel they have the right to vote in municipal contests. Recently, 16-year-olds in the Scotland election had a 75 percent turnout rate — higher than voters three times their age.

But two European countries — Norway and Austria — present a particularly interesting case.

In 2011, Norway officials decided to test out allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote. The result: 58 percent showed up to the polls — more than first-time voters ages 18 to 21. After lowering its voting age to 16, Austria saw a similar trend: 16- and 17-year-olds voted at higher rates than other young voters:

Admittedly, voting turnout among all young voters (25 and under) is lower than turnout among older voters. But in a University of Austria at Vienna study, researchers found that turnout rates among 16- and 17-year-olds in the country deviated the least from the mean:
These latter studies, which show a higher turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds than 18- to 21-year-olds, are indicative of a larger point: 18 is a terrible age to vote.

16 is a better age at which to form habits than 18

On July 1, 1971, the 26th Amendment of the United States Constitution was ratified, lowering the national voting age from 21 to 18. The act was largely fueled by young Vietnam protesters, frustrated that citizens could serve in the military at 18 but not vote.

The rationale for selecting the age of 18 was entirely based on the military service age—there was little information, in the form of rational discourse, as to what the ideal voting age was when considering habit formation.

At 18, most young Americans are going through major life changes: They’re entering the workforce, they’re exploring their entry into adulthood. They’re moving off to college—oftentimes, across state lines. These major changes are not beneficial to youth voter turnout: In a Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement report, 18-year-olds cited being “too busy” as a predominant rationale for not voting.

Furthermore, most of our rudimentary habits are formed prior to this final phase of adolescence, when we are living at home. A Brown University analysis of the Learning Habit Study (a dataset of 21,145 parent respondents) revealed that there is not much variance in routines and habits among children after the age of 9.
"While still in high school and at home, a teenager’s bad habit[s] can be moderated by parents,” psychologist Carl E. Pickhardt writes in *Psychology Today*.

“Away from family at college, however, and without this parental support, the young person is at the mercy of his own bad habit. It can be easier to install regular habits when still under the shelter of family than when one has moved out and there are more demands and distractions of independence to contend with.”

Voting, by measure of hundreds of studies, is a habitual act. Voting in one election increases the likelihood of voting in subsequent elections by 25 percent. As Peter Levine, a professor of citizenship and public affairs at Tufts University, says, “if you voted in a past election, you tend to vote again.” Likewise, voters who skip their first election — typically at age 18 — are far more inclined to become habitual nonvoters.

Entrenched both in familial and institutional support groups, 16-year-olds are in a better place to form long-lasting voting habits than 18-year-olds — but only if the right to vote is accompanied by a robust civics education.

**The right to vote means nothing without a basic knowledge of civics**

Generation Citizen students learn about issues in their local governments. *Generation Citizen*

In general, Americans of all ages possess a pitiful knowledge of civic affairs. Only 36 percent of us, for instance, can identify the three branches of US Government (Executive, Legislative, and Judicial).

Sixteen-year-olds are no exception. Though they are cognitively and habitually primed to vote, they often lack a deeper knowledge — or interest, for that matter — in the foundations of civic engagement. Should they get the vote in local elections, it is absolutely crucial that that new right comes in tandem with an educational support system.

Civics courses, designed to educate youth on the workings of both local and federal governments, have been proven to boost voter turnout. One study found that a year of such coursework can boost voter turnout for more than a decade after graduation.

Should Proposition F pass, the San Francisco Board of Education has committed to implementing a plan to give 16- and 17-year-olds the resources they need to be better informed citizens in an election.

“The entire school board is unanimously in support of this,” Matt Haney, president of the San Francisco School Board, tells me. “We can see a huge benefit for our school system and local government to have the perspective and voices of young people.”
Shortly after the proposition hit San Francisco's ballot, an organization called Vote16USA — a subsidiary of the much larger nonprofit, Generation Citizen — offered its support in designing a curriculum.

"We're entirely focused on getting young people civically engaged in the classroom," says Scott Warren, the founder of Generation Citizen. "Kids going through our program know who their local leaders are — school board members, mayors, state senators. It's a driver's ed course for democracy."

Unlike a typical government high school class, Generation Citizen's curriculum asks students to identify local issues in their communities, then work together — and with community members — to find solutions. They canvass neighborhoods, make phone calls, and meet with local politicians.

Over six years, Generation Citizen has worked with over 30,000 students in eight states, and reports dramatically improved rates of civic engagement.

San Francisco’s 16-year-olds: old enough to vote
Currently, cities in 13 states (and DC) have the legal ability to lower the voting age through charter amendments. The remaining states would require action at the state level. Zachary Crockett / Vox

Perhaps the most compelling argument for allowing San Francisco’s 16- and 17-year-olds to vote is that Proposition F was entirely spearheaded by those under the age of 18.

After then-high school sophomore Oliver York formulated his plan, he brought it to district supervisor John Avalos, who helped draft it into a ballot measure. From there, an intrepid group of teens brought it before the Board of Supervisors, where it passed nine votes to two. A small army of 100 youth showed up to the Board of Education and presented a case so compelling that it convinced officials to unilaterally endorse the measure.

York, 17, who laments not being able to go to endorsement meetings held at bars, says that youngsters have led the entire effort to get the voting age lowered.

“We’ve have students meeting with legislators. We’ve had students going out and knocking on doors. And we have students leading conversations at their high schools about why voting really matters,” he says.

Among them is Lorelei Vaisse, a 16-year-old at Lowell High School.

“When people see me — a 16-year-old — civically engaged, they think, ‘Well, you’re probably an exception,’” she says. “But I’m not! There are so many 16- and 17-year-olds who are excited about voting.”

Neither York nor Vaisse will be eligible to vote on the measure Tuesday. Instead, they’ll be on the streets on San Francisco, handing out fliers.

“We may be teenagers who do things that frustrate our parents,” says York. “But we’re also people who care about our city. And we’re thinking about solutions that will make it a better place — not just for us, but for everyone.”
Lowering the voting age is a new concept for many people, but there are many good reasons that show it is a sound and ethical choice.

1. **Young people have adult responsibilities, but are denied the same rights.** People under 18 are contributing active members of society. Millions of us are employed and volunteer in our communities. Many people also have “adult” responsibilities – such as being the primary caregiver for an ailing family member, running a business, and making substantial financial contributions to our households.

We are also capable of incredible intelligence and accomplishment. People under age 18 have the ability to win Nobel Prize, reach the summit of Mount Everest, conduct cancer research, become published authors, complete a graduate-level course in nuclear physics, run their own schools, work for NASA, and risk their lives to save others.

If young people are capable of such a variety of amazing feats, certainly we have the capacity to vote for a candidate that best represents our interests.

2. **Young people are expected to follow the law, but have no say in making it.** People under 18 are expected to follow adult laws and experience adult consequences if we don’t do so. In every state, it is possible for a youth to be transferred out of juvenile court into adult criminal court, and in certain states all crimes committed by 17-year-olds are automatically transferred. Approximately 250,000 people under age 18 are tried, sentenced, and incarcerated as adults every year across the United States. This means that not only does our society expect young people to know “right from wrong” and the consequences for breaking certain laws, but our society also expects that we are able to navigate the adult legal system and are mature enough to be placed in adult p
3. **Young people are already participating in politics.** Despite attempts to exclude us from the political process, young people are still making our voices heard. Young people have started ultimately successful campaigns for mayor and legislature before they were even old enough to vote.

People under 18 have also participated in politics by forming Political Action Committees, managing campaigns, advocating for our rights in front of legislative bodies, and becoming grassroots activists. And even though we are not allowed to vote, young people are able to contribute just as much money to a political campaign as adults can. In fact, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that banning people under 18 from this part of the political process violates our First Amendment rights.

Whether it is forming political groups at school, organizing protests, or using social media to express our views, young people find a way to become involved in politics. And if we want to be involved in the political process badly, how can politicians deny us the right any longer?

4. **Young people make good voters.** When the voting age has been lowered to 16, young people have shown a keen interest in voting. In 2013, when Takoma Park, Maryland, lowered its voting age to 16, registered voters had a turnout rate four times higher than voters over 18. And again in Hyattsville, Maryland (the second city in the U.S. to lower the voting age to 16), registered 16- and 17-year-old voters had a higher turnout rate than older voters. Seventeen-year-olds also had a higher turnout rate than people aged 20-50 in the Chicago mayoral election in 2014.

Similar trends have occurred outside the United States. Voters aged 16 to 17 had a higher turnout rate than voters under age 30 in Norway’s 2011 elections, voters under 35 in Scotland’s 2014 referendum elected younger members of parliament, and voters aged 18-20 in Austria’s elections in 2011 and 2014.

Although it can be difficult to determine what constitutes a “good vote” (see below), a group of researchers attempted to determine the quality of votes cast by people under 18 by comparing how well their votes aligned with stated values. Voters aged 16-17 were found to have made choices that were “more congruent with positions” leaving the researchers to conclude that “lowering the voting age does not appear to have a significant impact on input legitimacy and the quality of democratic decisions.”

5. **Lowering the voting age will help increase voter turnout.** Voting is a habitual act – people who vote in one election are more likely to vote in the next. Lowering the voting age will establish new voters who are less likely to be moving as a result of attending college or leaving their families. People under 18 tend to have stronger roots in their community, often having lived in the same area for many years and established connections to their school, family, and friends, and other community groups. This gives us an awareness and appreciation for local issues. As we are less likely to live away from home, we don’t have to deal with unclear residency status or unclear voting status.

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Voting program where people under 18 were allowed to cast votes in a mock election, parents who had children participating in the program were more likely to vote in the actual election.

6. Lowering the voting age will improve the lives of youth. Young people have a right to be heard and to have our interests taken seriously. However, by disenfranchising young people society tells us that we do not have anything of value to add to the political conversations in our society. It also gives politicians permission to ignore our interests as people under 18 have no way to hold their representatives accountable.

This is especially concerning since there are certain issues, such as environmental degradation, public education policy, long-term government debt, corporal punishment laws, and poverty that impact young people more than anyone else. Younger people may also be better in tune with modern issues around internet privacy, social media use. But since young people are underrepresented in politics, the issues affecting underrepresented as well. Lowering the voting age will also help to increase the civic engagement of youth. The words spoken before the Senate Judiciary Committee supporting lowering the voting age in as true then as they are now:

“The anachronistic voting-age limitation tends to alienate them from systematic political processes and drive them to a search for an alternative, sometimes violent, means to express their frustrations over the nation’s deals and actions. Lowering the voting age will provide them with a direct, constructive and democratic channel for making their views felt and for giving them a responsible stake in the future of the nation.” (1971 U.S. Code Cong. Admin. News at pp. 365-367)

7. Knowledge and experience are not criteria for voting eligibility. Even though young people can be as informed as older people, there is no requirement that either group have any political knowledge at all whenever tests have been used to register voters, it has always been about preventing certain groups from having political power rather than making sure the electorate is as informed as possible. Because discriminatory nature, knowledge or literacy tests are not used anywhere in the United States.

In spite of this, Congress has tried to determine the amount of knowledge a potential voter might need and then concluded in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that a sixth-grade education provided “sufficient comprehension, and intelligence to vote in any election.” Later on, when renewing the Act in 1975, the Judiciary Committee pushed this idea further by stating, “It is difficult to see why citizens who cannot read should be prevented from participating in decisions that directly affect their environment.” (S. Rep. No. 1975: 24)
8. There are no wrong votes. In a democracy, we don’t deny people the vote because we think they may vote badly. It can be easy to feel baffled by the way other people vote, even if we know them very well. Many believe that there are voters who are completely ignorant of the issues, woefully misguided about the election, who get their political ideas from biased media, vote for candidates based on their personality, and are overly naive about the world. And yet, disenfranchising people simply because we disagree with them is not a serious position, unless that group happens to be disenfranchised already.

No advocate for lowering the voting age believes that young people will always vote intelligently, especially not everyone can agree on what that means. But the same can be said for adults. Why are young people to a higher standard than everyone else?

9. Arguments against lowering the voting age used to disenfranchise adults, too. In a democracy, universal suffrage is the right of all citizens and the right to vote should not be taken away lightly or arbitrarily. When a group is to be disenfranchised, the burden of proving they deserve the right to vote should not lie with those who want to remove voting rights from those who want to remove voting rights, but rather requiring the oppressed group to prove which group deserves the right.

Throughout history, arguments against increasing voting rights have always been dubious and they still are no matter the group. If you think young people are naive or uneducated to vote, then ask yourself how you would feel about receiving a test before you could vote. No matter the test, many adults would fail. There are also adults that lack maturity or can be easily manipulated. The argument that certain groups of people lack the knowledge or maturity to vote has been used increasing voting rights to people who don’t own land, servants, and women throughout history.

10. Legislation to lower the voting age has more support than you think. When the United States decided to end age discrimination in voting for everyone 18 and over in all elections, it adopted the 26th Constitutional Amendment. The Amendment’s overwhelming and bipartisan support allowed it to make history as the first Constitutional Amendment ever to be ratified.

Today, lowering the voting age continues to have wide support. Nearly half of US states have seen attempts to lower the voting age in the last two decades, including four towns in Maryland that have successfully lowered their voting age to 16. Internationally, more than 25 countries have a voting age lower than 18 and more are looking at following their lead. You can check out our Voting Age Status Report to learn more about the wide-ranging support to lower the voting age.
This screenshot was taken from the Dynamite Daily.

**VOTING AGE LOWERED TO 12 IN HANDFUL OF STATES**

By Nooz Sayer  |  January 14th, 2019

New York — After laws passed in several states last week allowing anyone age 12 or above to vote in state and local elections, fifteen new ballot initiatives appeared connected to pop stars Beyoncé and BTS.

In Minnesota, Washington, Florida, Colombia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and New Mexico, new ballot initiatives appeared ranging from new public statues and monuments to replacing an official state song to changing state flags. Each of these initiatives involved using the images and music of Beyoncé and the seven members of boy band BTS.

In Florida, the official Beyoncé fan club garnered 25,000 signatures for their proposed ballot initiative to change the official state song from "The Swanee River (Old Folks at Home)" to "Crazy In Love," a song Beyoncé recorded in 2003. "We just feel our state needs a change. We need a song that’s more lil...like our state is, ya know?" explained group spokesperson, Leah Belknap.

In New Mexico, the teen fun group BTS Dynasty proposed building seven life-size statues, one for each member of the boy band, to be placed in downtown Albuquerque. A late addition to the proposal also would require that BTS be given first choice to headline the annual Summerfest music festival every year.

Representatives for Beyoncé and BTS said they had no comment on the proposed initiatives.

**Comments**

Add a comment...

MusicLuv13  |  This is going to be awesome!

GamerDude98  |  We should have a video game statue lol