Evidence: Do the Facts Hold Up?

Students dig into an article to determine whether they can trust the information by verifying the evidence it presents.

**GRADE LEVEL:** Middle and high school

**TIME:** 30-60 minutes

**MATERIALS:** Do the Facts Hold Up worksheet (download), E.S.C.A.P.E. Junk News poster (download), a news story to fact-check, internet access

**PREPARE**

1. Make copies of the Do the Facts Hold Up worksheet, one per student.
2. Select a news story for students to research. (Depending on your angle for this topic, you may want to choose a real news story, a fake/questionable story, or both.) You also may allow them to choose their own news story. Note: In order to complete the worksheet, articles about an event are better than those about an ongoing issue.

**DO**

1. Ask students how they determine whether information they find online is trustworthy.
2. Introduce the E.S.C.A.P.E. acronym by writing the six key concepts on the board or projecting the poster. Explain that considering even one of these six concepts can help determine whether information is reliable.
3. Explain that they will focus on evidence for this activity. Looking at evidence means digging into the facts in the story – key people, events, numbers, etc. – to see if they hold up.
4. Divide students into pairs, or allow them to work individually. Distribute a news story for them to research or give them 5 minutes to find their own. Have each group take 5 minutes to read and summarize the news story.
5. Then, give them 10-15 minutes to answer the questions in the left-hand column of the worksheet (what, when, where, why/how and who) for the original article.
6. Next, they should take 10-15 minutes to verify the original article’s information. This is a tight timeline, but push groups to work quickly and broadly rather than getting bogged down. Emphasize the importance of finding additional sources that are independent from the original story.
7. Have groups/students share their findings. As a class, decide if the original story or stories is/are trustworthy and discuss the questions below.

**DISCUSS**

1. After reading the story once, could you make a determination about the reliability of this story? Why or why not?
2. After attempting to verify the story, were you able to determine its reliability? Why or why not?
3. Which of the reporter’s questions do you think is the most important to answer and verify in order to determine the story’s reliability, and why?
4. Explain any outstanding questions you still have about the original source. Which of the other E.S.C.A.P.E. concepts would you want to investigate further to determine if it is trustworthy?