



# REFLECTIONS

## Fact Check Like a Pro in 9 Easy Steps

It is darn near impossible to separate fact from fiction these days. If you have spent any amount of time perusing online content, you know exactly what I am talking about. I cringe several times an hour when I see rampant sharing of memes on social media as if they are legitimate news sources. Even websites that appear to be authentic are not always what they seem.

Fake news – websites that publish hoaxes and deliberately misleading information – are widespread and difficult to detect. Many people are easily fooled, with the 65 and older demographic leading the way in those most often duped by bogus sites. With 1 in 5 U.S. adults acknowledging their main source of daily news is from social media, the schemes are becoming more elaborate to trick us into believing things that simply are not true.

### *Tricks of the Trade*

When I was in Journalism school, we spent a lot of time discussing supporting facts and how to discern what was legitimate data and what was someone's personal opinion cleverly disguised as news. You don't have to be a trained journalist to fact check like a pro if you follow these nine easy steps.

#### 1. Verify before you share

Memes and articles have a way of going viral on social media without anyone bothering to verify if what they are seeing – and sharing – is legit information. While it takes a little bit of effort, it always is advisable to seek out at least three pieces of corroborating evidence from reliable sources before sharing anything.



#### 2. Do the “smell test”

No, I am not suggesting you stick your nose up to the screen and take a deep whiff. We're not bloodhounds. What I am suggesting is to follow a tried and true journalism trick called the smell test.

S – Source: who is providing the information?

M – Motivation – why are they sharing this information?

E – Evidence – what evidence have they provided to support their generalizations?

L – Logic – do the facts logically compel the conclusions the author is asking me to reach?

L – Left Out – what data/evidence is missing that might change our perspective or interpretation of the information?

Learn more about the smell test in my [interview](#) with YouTuber Nour Negm.

#### 3. Consider the source

If the article appears in an online publication, check who owns it. Doing a whoxy.com domain registry search will provide information about the site's ownership. Once you have that information, you can research to see if the site has political leanings or other reputation management issues that would make it unreliable.

#### 4. Check the author

Is it a real person? If so, are they a credible source or authority for the subject material on which they are speaking?

#### 5. Look for supporting sources

Does the information provide supporting sources? If so, go back to the original source material references to ensure it is being cited and used correctly.

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#### 6. Check your confirmation biases

We tend to accept at face value information that supports our beliefs and political leanings. Do not be quick to trust something just because it supports your narrative.

#### 7. Read the “About Us” section

If you are using a website or online resource, check the About Us section. All reputable websites have one, as well as contact information for how to reach out with questions or concerns. If these are missing from a site, chances are, it is not legit.

#### 8. Check the date

Old news stories are not relevant to current events. Make sure you are sharing new information. Social media is especially bad for people sharing years-old stories as if they were brand new information because they have not bothered to check the publication date.

#### 9. Check for satire

With everything going on in the world right now, it is getting harder to distinguish real news from satire. There are many satirical sites, including The Onion and Babylon Bee. If you come across a story that seems preposterous, check to make sure it is not satire.

#### Fact-Checking Resources

Fact-checking is not a quick and painless endeavor, but it is worth the effort. Here are some reliable sites you can use to verify memes, articles, and miscellaneous facts.

- [FactCheck.org](https://www.factcheck.org/)
- [AllSides](https://www.allsides.com/)
- [Truth or Fiction](https://www.truthorfiction.org/)
- [Open Secrets](https://www.opensecrets.com/)
- [Politifact](https://www.politifact.com/)
- [Snopes](https://www.snopes.com/)
- [ProPublica](https://www.propublica.com/)
- [The Sunlight Foundation](https://www.sunlightfoundation.com/)

## The Write Reflection Adds Virtual “Girl Friday” to its Line-up of Services



*Ann Kerekes*

Do you sometimes find yourself wishing there was a 25th hour in every day so you could get caught up on everything life throws your way? We are all pressed for time and no matter how much we wish for it we are limited in how many hours a day we can realistically devote to accomplishing tasks.

Virtual assistants are a great way to help lessen the burden and free yourself up to enjoy the important things in life, while still tackling your professional goals. The Write Reflection is pleased to announce an expansion of its services to include virtual assistance. Let us help reduce your anxiety with a competent virtual assistant who can help carry the load.

Virtual assistance is now available in the following areas:

- Bookkeeping
- Payroll & Payroll Taxes
- Office Administration
- Secretarial/Administrative Assistance
- Microsoft Office
- QuickBooks
- Customer Service

Virtual assistant services are provided by team member Ann Kerekes, who has more than three decades of administrative experience. She has a proven track record in senior-level support, management, and training. Her key strengths include organizational management, fostering personal relationships, maximizing efficiency, and streamlining processes.

“We are extremely excited to add Ann to our team at The Write Reflection,” said Write Reflection CEO and Founder Shari Berg. “She is an ambitious and outgoing professional with a passion for helping others. Ann is a self-motivated and valuable forward-facing asset for any company or organization, and we are excited to be able to offer her services to our clients.”

[Contact us](#) today to learn more about how Ann can virtually assist you.

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