



Analysis Questions: A Starter Set

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The questions professional researchers ask, the answers to which will help gauge the reliability and validity of information, often include:

- Where is the material found?
 - What type of domain is it (.com / .org / .edu / .gov / .mil / country code)?
 - Is this appropriate for the material presented?
 - Might it be a personal page, often not highly credible (use of ~ in URL often suggests this)?
- Are names or “about us” links visible and, if so, what do those indicate?
 - Does an “about us” entry indicate sponsorship?
- Who owns and operates of the host server (use WHOIS and DNS LOOKUP tools to determine the registered owner of the website?)
 - Is the server at the site where it claims to be (do a traceroute search to determine the path between your computer and the server hosting the information.)
 - If the server is not located where it purports to reside, why not?
- Is the material current or dated (look for a “last updated” statement or dates on references)?
- What is the name or title of the piece and does it reveal any potential bias?
- What are the sources used, including authors and website operators (check source code as the identity of the webpage’s author is often embedded in the code)?
- Are the sources or interviewees considered authorities?
 - If so, by whom?
- Is the material unsourced, suggesting a low degree of reliability?
- Are there public profiles of everyone (interviewer, interviewee, the medium) involved in the piece?
 - Are there names or “about” links visible and, if so, what do those indicate?
- What is the size (length in column inches/time) of the piece?
- Can the material of interest be confirmed or denied through other sources?
- Was any material copyrighted – and if so, by whom?
- Are there any personas or screen names used in the material?

- If there are, what do searches on those reveal?
- Who owns or operates the medium, as searched through WhoIs sites or books?
 - Does this medium have a guest book or reader commentary section that can be reviewed?
- What is the size of the readership or viewership, who are they, what are their information biases, and where do they come from?
 - Is there a site meter or readership information posted on the medium?
 - Who visits the site or reads the material?
- Is there point of contact information that can be traced, such as names, phone numbers, web identities, etc.
- Do any of the people have a presence on social media that can be researched?
- When was the information published, and if republished give both original and re-publication dates.
- Did stories in the same news cycle contain the same details and information?
- Did subsequent stories in other news cycles update or change the details?

- Were there any discrepancies between independent media reports and reports from government-run agencies?
- Were there illustrations, photographs, sound bites, or videos associated with the piece and what part did they play?
- Did the interviewee or interviewer reveal any emotion, motivation or bias?
 - If so, what and how?
 - Are the interviewee or interviewer known to be biased or producers of slanted information?
- What agency, person, group or organization provided the original information to the reporting medium?
- Are any of the resources involved in the article or report anonymous?
 - If so, is there an obvious reason for the anonymity?
- Was the material allegedly re-reported from another news source?
 - Can the other resource be located and if not, why?
 - If so, do the two sources agree in detail
- What reputation does that resource generally have?
- Is the resource associated with government, commercial organization, NGO, educational institution or think tank?
 - If so, who else is listed as an associate of that organization (expert lists, board of directors, top officers?)
 - Is the resource generally known to have a slant?
 - Does that resource have different reputations regarding different subjects?
- Where is the resource located (physical and virtual address [web service provider and Top Level Domain {TLD}]) and what is the contact information (phone, e-mail)
 - Is it located in proximity to other groups or organizations that would indicate a bias potential?
 - What are the details of the similar organizations or media resources?
- Do any links or advertisements on the medium's website suggest probable target audiences or suggest associations that might indicate bias?
- Are there links to social network sites that can be exploited?

- Are there similar organizations or media resources located at the same place?
- Where was the interview conducted?
 - Were the interviewer and the interviewee located in the same place or were electronic/other communications, such as written questions, used?
- What government or media organization provided the information?
- What overall reputation does that medium generally have?
 - Is the medium generally known to have a slant?
 - Does that medium have different reputations for different subjects?
- Has this resource done similar articles or interviews before?
 - If so, did it use the same information sources at that time?
- Is there any indication the interviewer and interviewee have a known or probable relationship?
- What is the identity of the people or groups who registered the website domain name?
- Who is the author/interviewer?
- Were questions appropriate to the subject?
- Were questions and subjects left out?
- Were answers appropriate to the questions?
- What is the general reputation of the author/interviewer?
- Is the author/interviewer known to have specific slants on issues or contacts with the subjects of his/her stories or interviews?
- How much time was spent researching or interviewing, if known?
- Are there any indications or claims the interview, answers or information was altered or edited?
- Were the questions or material appropriate to the ostensible subject?
- Are there trackable citations or cross-references listed?
- Do other news agency stories or government reports agree with the report?
 - If there is disagreement, on what points is the disagreement centered?
- Were multiple languages used in the production of the material?
 - If so can the accuracy of any translations be proven?