

Verify Before You Share: A Field Guide

FREE EDUCATIONAL BRIEF · LEARN AI. UNCOVER THE DATA. PROTECT THE TRUTH.

Every share is a small act of publishing, and your credibility travels with it. Most misinformation spreads not through malice but through good people moving too fast. The counter is a short protocol — about sixty seconds — applied to anything surprising, outrage-perfect, or consequential before it leaves your hands.

THE 60-SECOND PROTOCOL

» 1. Source (15s)

Who posted this first? Account age, history, and whether the claimed origin actually exists. Screenshots of screenshots score zero.

» 2. Date & context (15s)

Old media re-captioned as breaking news is the most common trick — check whether the event matches the claimed time and place.

» 3. Cross-check (15s)

Is any independent, reputable outlet reporting it? A genuinely major event has more than one witness.

» 4. Synthetic scan (15s)

Provenance credentials present? Hands, text, physics, and audio sync plausible? Does the person's known record contain anything like this?

EMOTIONAL TRIPWIRES

Manufactured content is engineered to spike feeling — outrage, vindication, fear — because feeling suppresses checking. The strength of your reaction is itself a signal: the more perfectly a post confirms what you already believe about your least favorite people, the more scrutiny it has earned.

WHEN YOU'RE UNSURE

Don't share, or share with your uncertainty attached: “unverified — treat accordingly.” Honest uncertainty outranks confident error; that principle is written into SMI's community guidelines because it is the difference between a network that informs and one that amplifies. And when you get one wrong — everyone does — correct it visibly. Corrections build the credibility that sharing spends.

INVESTIGATOR'S TAKEAWAYS

- Sharing is publishing; your name underwrites it.
- Source, date, cross-check, synthetic scan — sixty seconds total.
- Strong emotion is a signal to slow down, not speed up.
- “Unverified” is a legitimate, honest way to share.
- Visible corrections earn more trust than silent deletions.