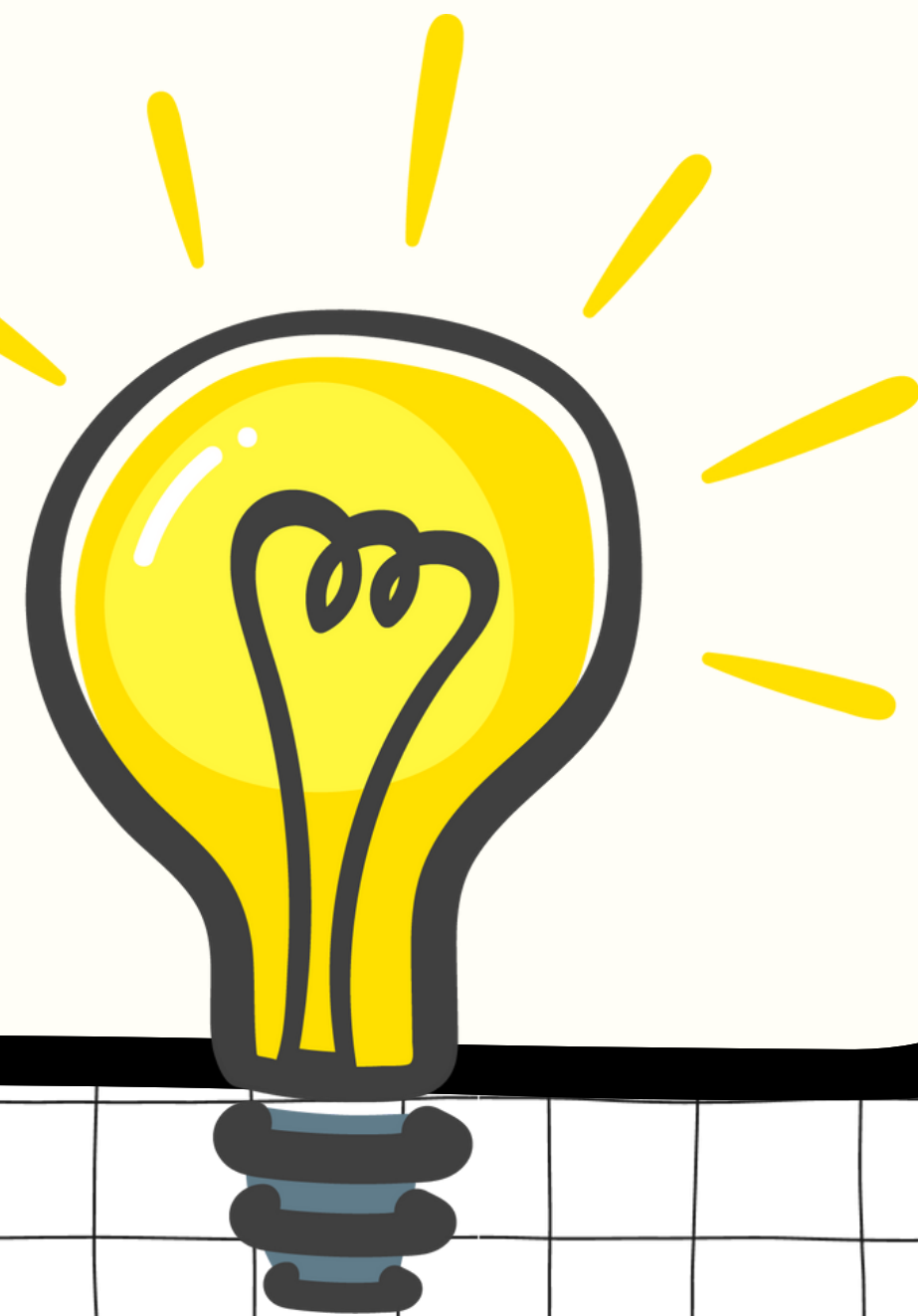
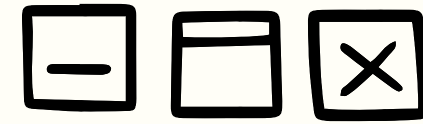




# **Evaluating Information Online**

A Skill Development Course  
for Busy Adults  
by the Tigard Public Library





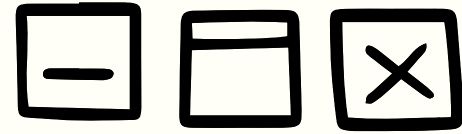
# **Who is this course for?**

**Welcome! This has been designed with you in mind!**

**If you've ever wondered how to find quality information on the internet (yes, that is possible!), this course is for you.**

**In a quick 90 minutes, you'll come away with skills to parse the good from the bad, know how to seek out reliable info, and even how to be a better online citizen.**

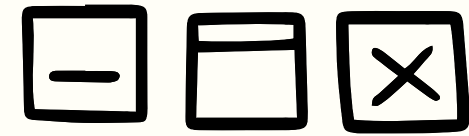
**This course is designed for busy adults and can be done at your own pace.**



**This course is interactive!**

**If something is underlined, it's a link  
and you should definitely click on it!**





**Do we need accurate and  
reliable information?**

**Does it matter?**

**Yes, and yes!**

- **We cannot make informed decisions or know about our communities and the world without it.**
- **Let's explore what information is and what different types there are.**

# Information, what is it?

Knowledge communicated concerning some particular fact, subject, or event; that of which one is apprised or told; intelligence, news.

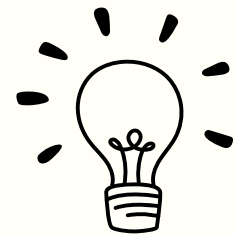
Oxford English Dictionary; <https://www.oed.com/>

Good

Bad

Ugly

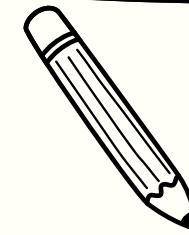
## Reliable



Information should always be accurate, and be either free of bias or making note of its own bias. To have value, information also needs to be useful for a given purpose.

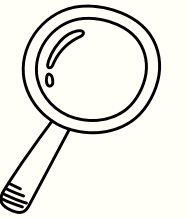
Guides: Evaluating Information: Propaganda, Misinformation, Disinformation; <https://guides.library.jhu.edu/c.php?g=202581&p=1334961>

## Misinformation

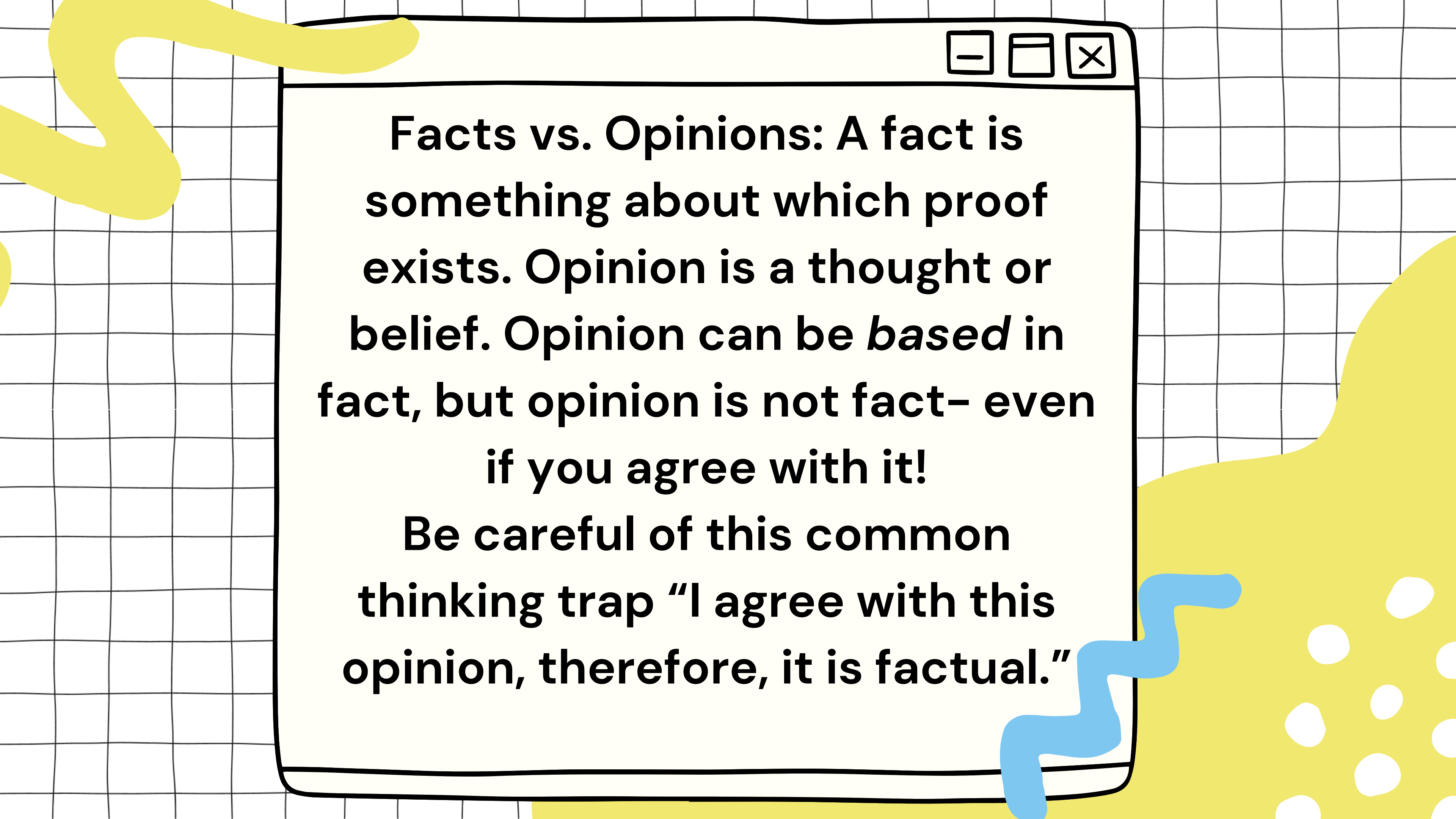


Misinformation is unreliable information that was not intended to cause harm. Some examples are; biased information, inaccurate "breaking news", (similarly) info that is later discovered to be inaccurate, and satire taken out of context.

## Disinformation



Disinformation is created with intent to harm; the creator knows it is false, is deliberately false/misleading, and is designed to manipulate/control.



**Facts vs. Opinions: A fact is something about which proof exists. Opinion is a thought or belief. Opinion can be *based* in fact, but opinion is not fact— even if you agree with it!**

**Be careful of this common thinking trap “I agree with this opinion, therefore, it is factual.”**

# Notes on information:

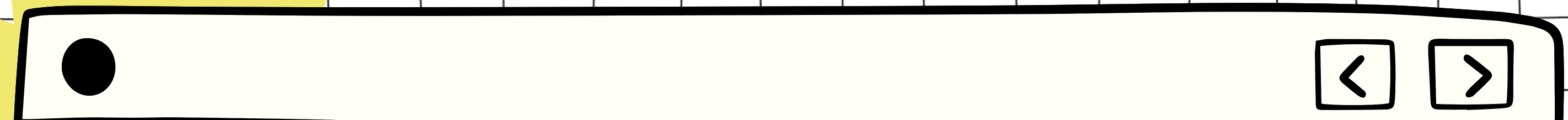
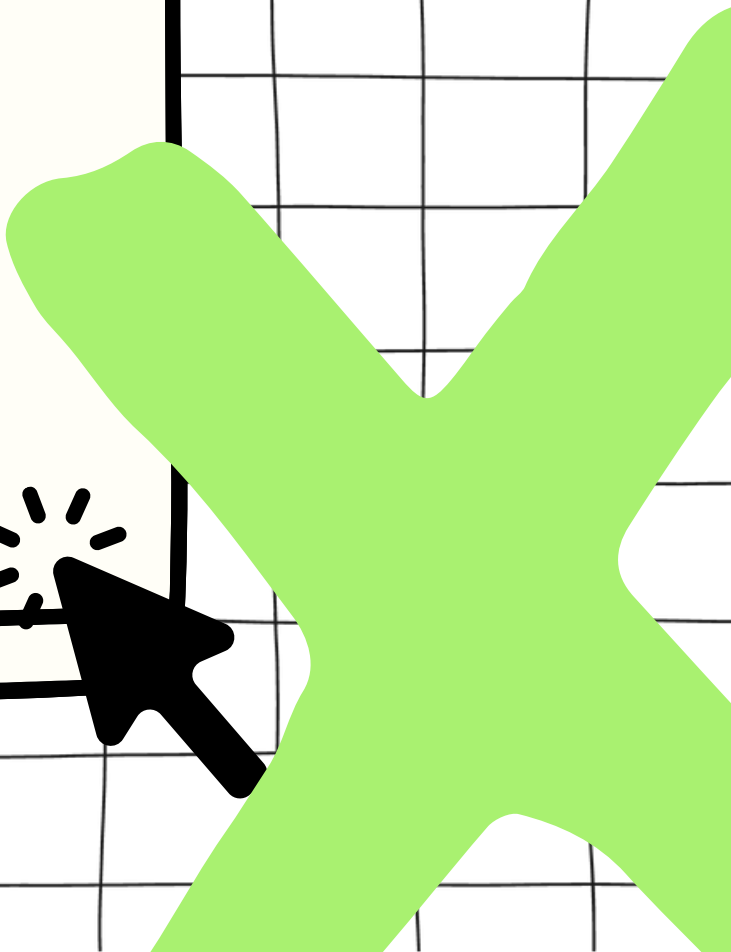
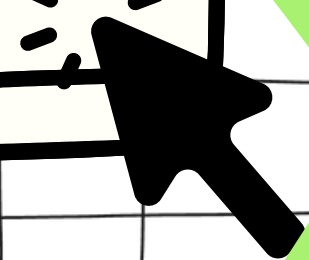
- You are sure to run into information that is upsetting or that you don't like! How you *feel* about it does not necessarily make it unreliable, fake, or bad.
- Here are a couple interesting information types you may have heard of. Would you classify them as reliable, misinformation, disinformation, or other?:
  - Satire- [The Merriam-Webster definition](#): Satire applies to writing that exposes or ridicules conduct, doctrines, or institutions either by direct criticism or more often through irony, parody, or caricature. For example, the online "news site" [The Onion](#).
  - Propaganda- [The Oxford Dictionary definition](#): The systematic dissemination of information, esp. in a biased or misleading way, in order to promote a particular cause or point of view, often a political agenda.

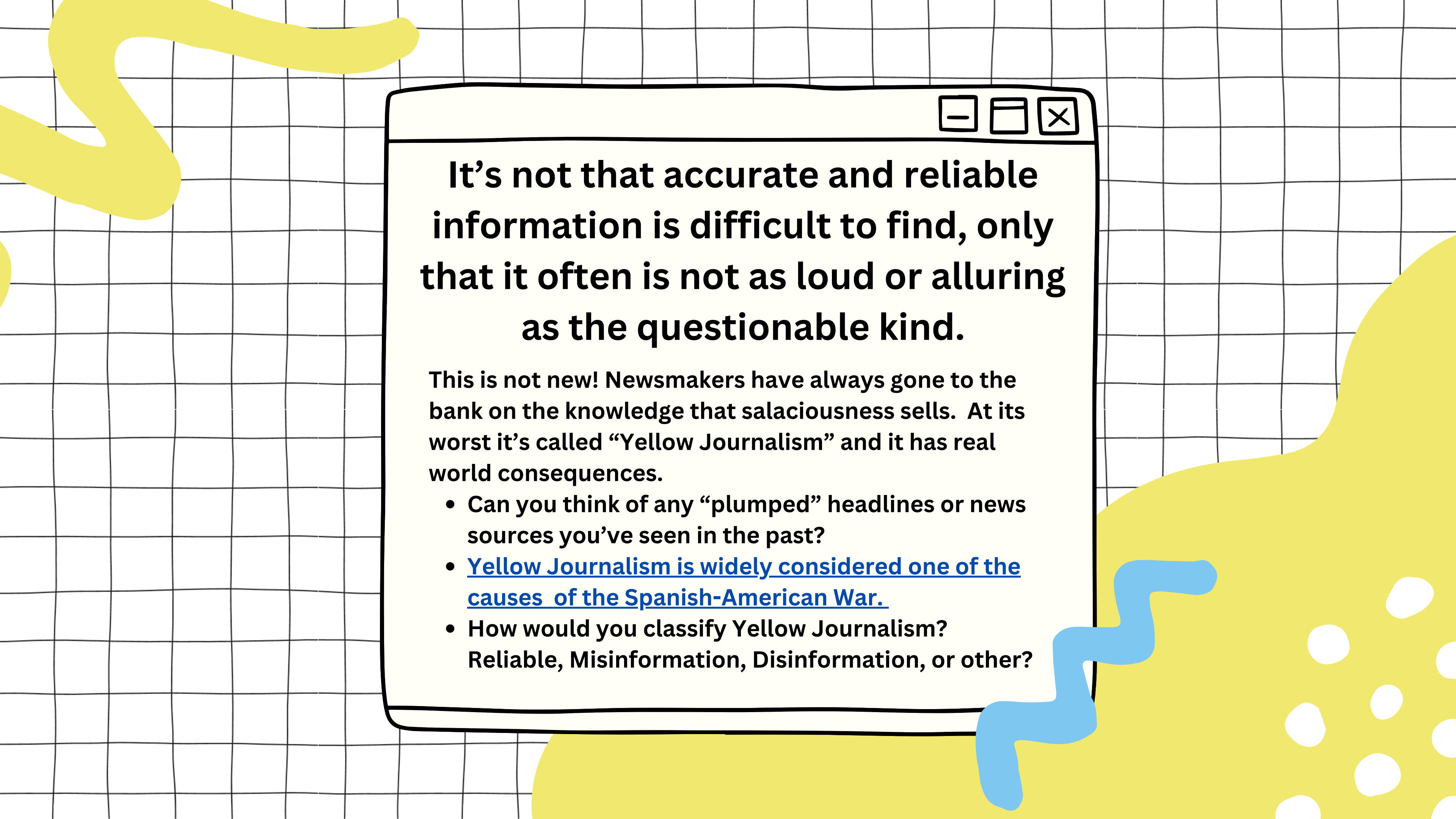
● Want more? Check out this awesome guide from the University of Washington Libraries-  
[News: Fake News, Misinformation & Disinformation](#)

## Takeaways

- **Not all information is created equally.**
- **Opinions are not facts.**
- **The intention with which information is created matters.**
- **It is your job to discern what is and is not reliable or accurate.**
- **Don't worry, we'll help you develop the skills you need!**



- 
- A hand-drawn window with a black border and a white background. In the top-left corner, there is a black circle. In the top-right corner, there are two square buttons with left and right arrows respectively. The window contains two bullet points.
- **If quality, reliable information is so important, why does it seem like it is hard to find?**
  - **Why is unreliable information so easy to fall for? (Don't worry, we've all done it.)**
- 
- A large, hand-drawn green 'X' mark is located in the bottom-right corner of the image, partially overlapping the window's border.
- 
- A black mouse cursor arrow is pointing towards the bottom-right corner of the window, near a small burst of lines indicating a click or highlight.



It's not that accurate and reliable information is difficult to find, only that it often is not as loud or alluring as the questionable kind.

This is not new! Newsmakers have always gone to the bank on the knowledge that salaciousness sells. At its worst it's called "Yellow Journalism" and it has real world consequences.

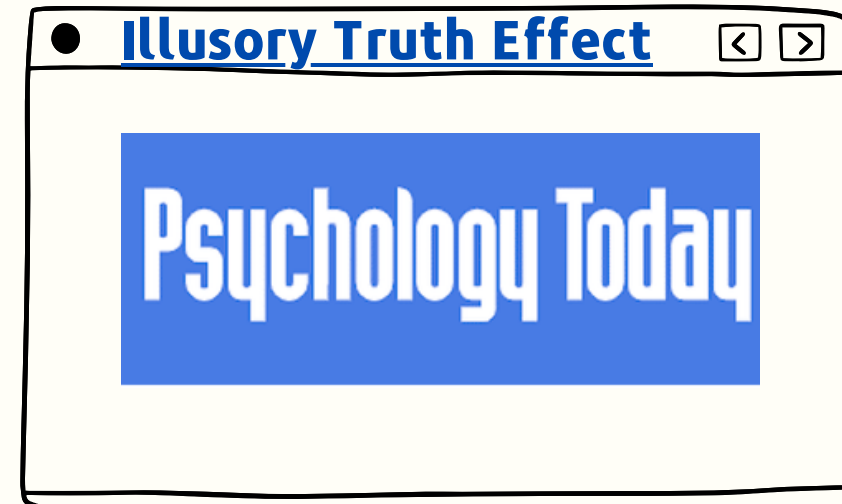
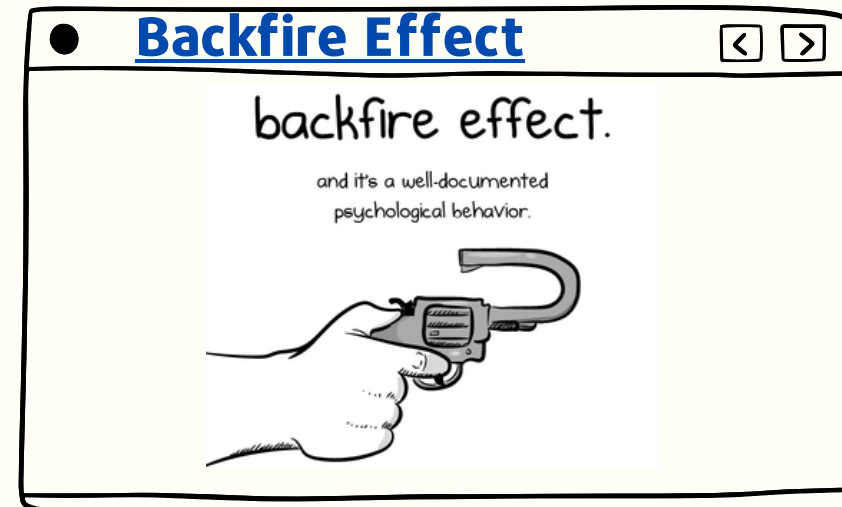
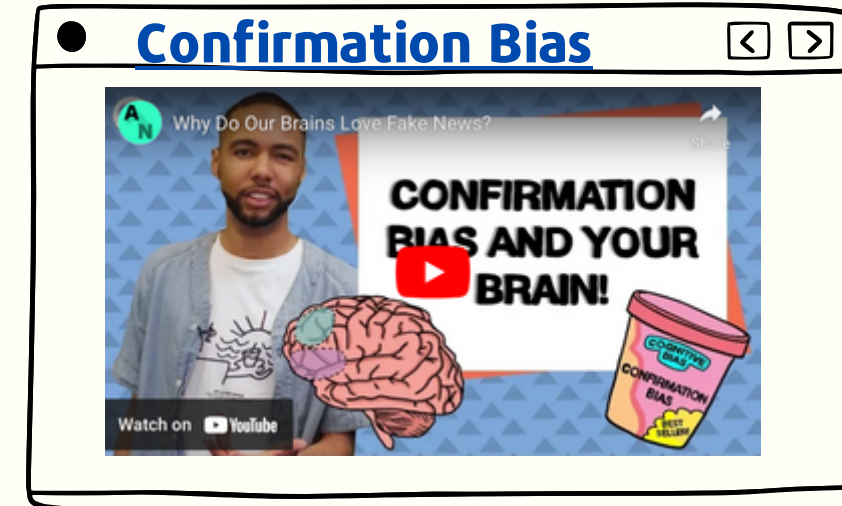
- Can you think of any "plumped" headlines or news sources you've seen in the past?
- [Yellow Journalism is widely considered one of the causes of the Spanish-American War.](#)
- How would you classify Yellow Journalism?  
Reliable, Misinformation, Disinformation, or other?

# We're smart people!

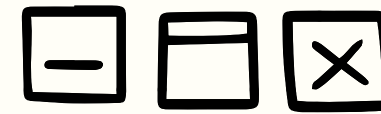
## So why is unreliable info so alluring?

- Our brains and emotions want to make sense of the world and sometimes don't do a great job separating fact from fiction.
- It's okay! We can learn to do better once we recognize why things go wrong.

Check out these scientifically studied phenomena which can happen in our brains when we encounter information.  
Click on each of the three links.

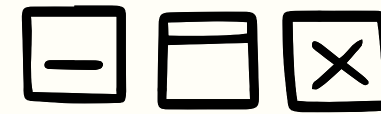


# Takeaways Part 1



- Extra! Extra! Read all about how drama sells!
- When our brains are in an emotional state, we don't think as clearly. If you are having an emotional reaction to new information, ask yourself why. Pause and let yourself return to baseline. [The Power of Emotions in Decision Making; Psychology Today; August 7, 2023](#)
- Our brains want to jump to confirm existing thoughts and beliefs (a.k.a. bias)- We can challenge this phenomenon by remaining mindful of our thoughts and using critical thinking skills. [What Cognitive Bias Is and How To Overcome It; Cleveland Clinic; December 08, 2023](#)

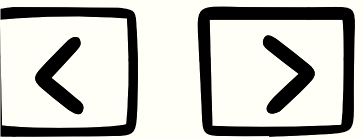
## Takeaways Part 2



- When our core beliefs are challenged, our brain tries to keep us safe by rejecting new information. All we can do about that is notice when it's happening and try to keep an open mind. Seeing is believing: how media mythbusting can actually make false beliefs stronger; News and Events; April 19, 2023
- If you hear a lie repeated enough times, your brain will try to integrate it as truth. Stay mindful of where you get your information and make sure it's truthful and accurate. The effects of repetition frequency on the illusory truth effect; Cognitive research: principles and implications; May 13, 2021

# How do we find the good stuff? Part 1

We start by learning how to spot the Bad and the Ugly and learning to observe our thoughts and reactions.



01

Be aware of where popular media companies fall on the political spectrum. [Penn State Libraries](#) has created this [easy to understand graphic](#). Are you surprised by any of them?

02

[Use the S.I.F.T method](#) to investigate



03

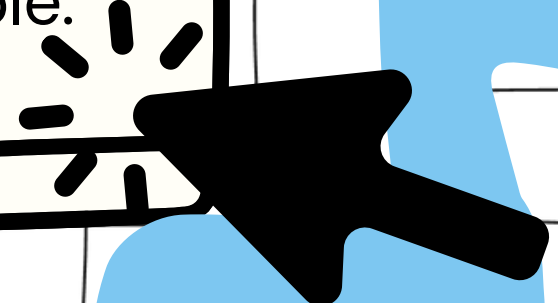
[Sharpen your spotting skills](#)

**HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS**

- CONSIDER THE SOURCE**: Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.
- READ BEYOND**: Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?
- CHECK THE AUTHOR**: Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?
- SUPPORTING SOURCES?**: Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.
- CHECK THE DATE**: Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.
- IS IT A JOKE?**: If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.
- CHECK YOUR BIASES**: Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.
- ASK THE EXPERTS**: Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

04

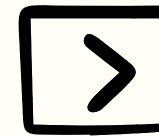
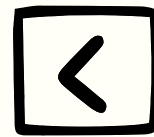
Start making a habit of noticing your thoughts and feelings when you encounter information. Awareness of your own bias and opinions will help your mind stay flexible.



## How do we find the good stuff? Part 2

Learn to seek out reliable information.

This will get easier with practice!



01

If it is a reliable source, you will be able to say "Yes!" to the statements in blue.



02

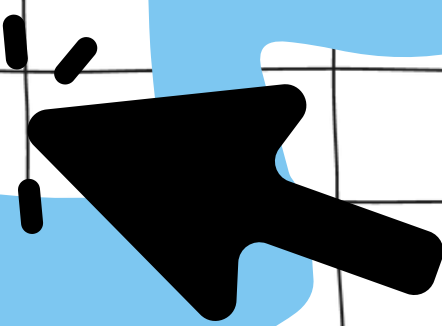
Make a habit of steering yourself toward information that is factual and not biased or editorialized. [Allsides.com](https://www.allsides.com) is a headline aggregator that shows the **Left**, **Middle**, and **Right** headlines at-a-glance. You can see where the center is *and* how headlines are written differently based on political affiliation.

03

Check it out!  
These 3 links are to highly regarded nonpartisan fact checking sites. And then begin using them!  
<https://www.factcheck.org>  
<https://www.snopes.com/>  
<https://www.politifact.com/>

Now that you have more skills and knowledge, what do you think about getting reliable information via social media?

Yes, No, Maybe, Sometimes?



# What about AI?!

Artificial Intelligence is a huge topic with many facets. For our discussion, we'll be talking about AI generated news and information.

Spotting AI generated information is not so different from spotting misinformation and disinformation. The skill set is similar!

## Some thoughts to keep in mind:

- Machines don't have a horse in the race, but people do! Just as before, intention and use matter.
- Like any other tool, AI is not inherently *bad*. We do however, need to pay attention to *how* it is used.

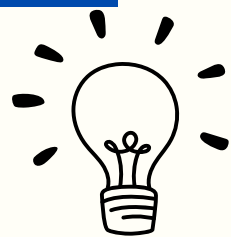
- [Ethical journalists/companies](#) will have transparent [A.I policies](#).
- Use the skills you learned earlier in the course to pause, back-up, evaluate, and seek out additional information.
- Fact Check!
- See the Resources Page at the end of this presentation for more info.





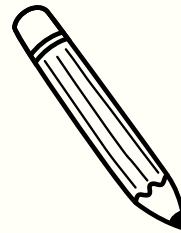
**This is a lot!**  
**What can I do about it?**

You can start by  
adopting practices  
to make yourself a  
better internet  
citizen.



Protect yourself

- Think before you post/share.
- Be mindful of how much you post/share.
- Protect your privacy and passwords.



Look out for others

- Apply the Golden Rule while online: treat others as you would like to be treated.
- Report bullying.
- Report illegal activity.





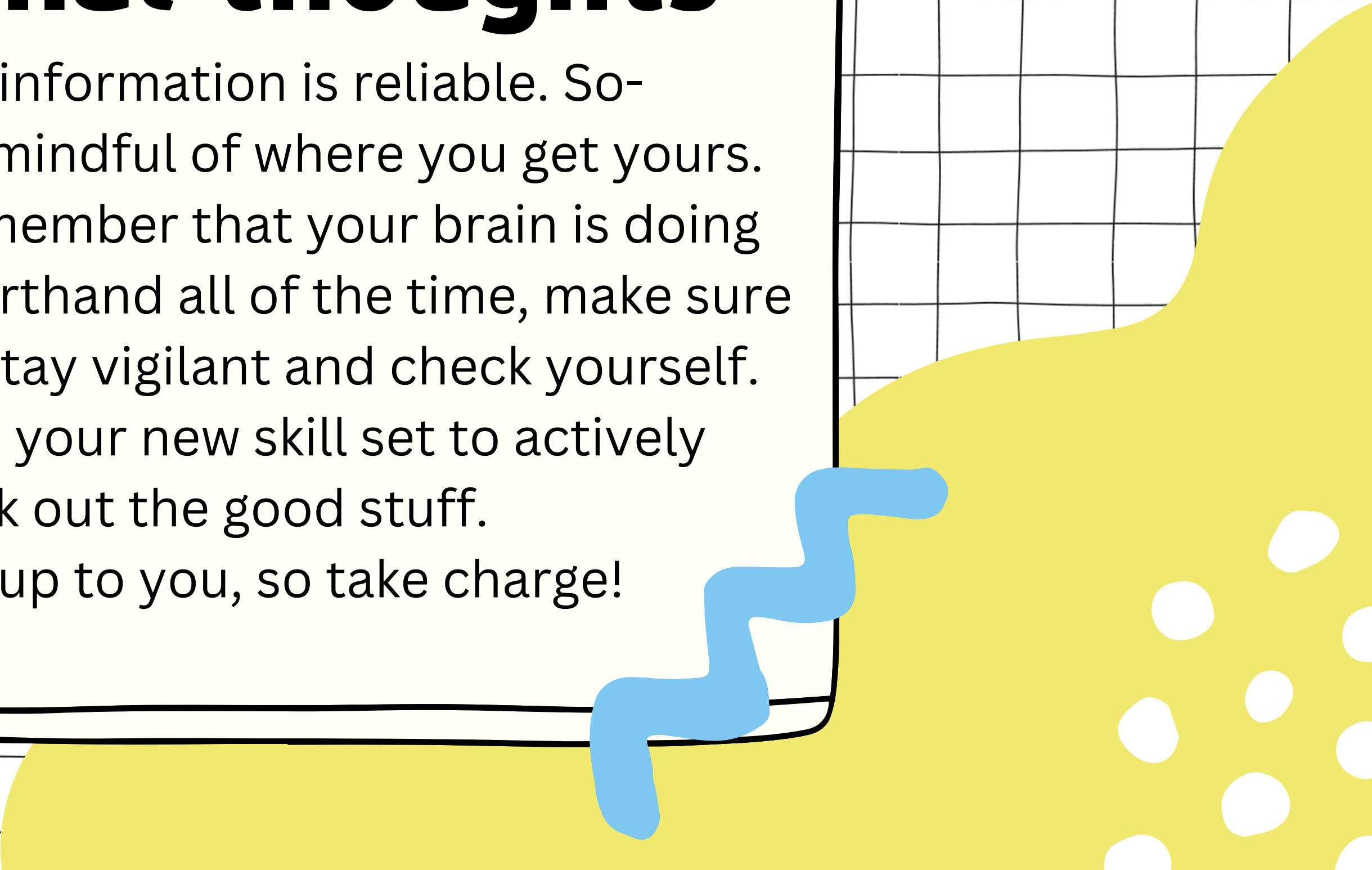
**Now that you have some new skills,  
here are some questions to consider:**

1. How would you describe unreliable information to someone with no knowledge?
2. What is one fact or nugget that surprised you from this course? Why did it surprise you?
3. Think of a time you've shared or otherwise passed on unreliable information. Knowing what you know now, what will you do differently in the future?
4. What is one trick you learned for evaluating information that you will use going forward?



# Final thoughts

Not all information is reliable. So-

1. Be mindful of where you get yours.
  2. Remember that your brain is doing shorthand all of the time, make sure to stay vigilant and check yourself.
  3. Use your new skill set to actively seek out the good stuff.
  4. It's up to you, so take charge!
- 

# Resource page

[American Press Institute](#)

[How to Spot Fake News- Penn State Libraries](#)

[Albuquerque and Bernillo Co. Public Libraries- Help My News is Fake](#)

[Action4Media Education News Infographic](#)

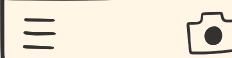
[MIT Technology Review- How to Spot AI Text](#)

[NPR- How to Spot AI Generated Images](#)

[Poynter.org Opinion about AI Gen Text in Journalism](#)

[Project Information Literacy](#)

[Choose your sources wisely- Penn State Libraries](#)



[Wired-How to Spot AI-Generated Art, According to Artists](#)

[NPR-How to avoid sharing false or misleading news about the election](#)

[News Literacy Project](#)

[UofW Library News Guides](#)

[SUNY-Albany Fake News Playlist](#)

[S.I.F.T. Method](#)

[UofA Internet Citizenship](#)

[Temple Univ. Digital Citizen Guide](#)

[Google Reverse Image Search](#)

[Allsides.com](#)

[factcheck.org](#)

[Politifact](#)

[Snopes](#)





# Thank you!

If you have further questions, please  
email: [annies@tigard-or.gov](mailto:annies@tigard-or.gov)

