

Search like a pro video

Video transcript

Lauren: Hi, everyone! I'm Lauren. Now asking yourself: who's behind the information, what's the evidence and what other sources are saying, are really the building blocks of any fact check. But to make sure you're getting the most credible information from the best sources you should use a skill called lateral reading, which is another Stanford History Education Group term.

Here's how it works. Most of us read up and down the page, right? We find an article and we read the top then, let's face it, kind of skim to the bottom. But fact-checkers do things a little differently — they read laterally. They open up a bunch of tabs, and read across all of them to learn all that they can about who's behind the information to judge if they're a good source.

For example, I found this article from a website called The Babylon Bee. If you're familiar with the site, just bear with me for a sec, they reported that we only have 12 years left until experts changed the timeline on global warming again. But doing a little lateral reading, I got off the site I was on, opened a fresh tab and searched Babylon Bee to find out more about them. Then I opened another tab, and another, and pretty easily found multiple websites and articles that described The Babylon Bee as a conservative Christian satire website.

Lateral reading is a great way to make sure that when you're trying to answer question three, what other sources are saying, that those sources are credible and actually worth your time. The only downside is that your tabs will look like a hot mess, but that's totally fine. It means that you're doing it right.

Now when you're searching, you also need to use a term called click restraint. Basically when you do a keyword search you should restrain yourself and resist the urge to just click on the very first option. Just because it's first doesn't mean it's the best or the most credible. Instead, take some time to look at the results and make sure you're not, you know, clicking on an ad on accident. I promise, taking an extra 10 seconds at the front end of your search will save you a lot of time in the long run.