

New tool to help anyone learn how to spot fake news

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Several years of research and development are behind the News Evaluator, a tool that teaches an evidence-based method for online source criticism. The tool has now been launched in English and Swedish

versions for use by those wanting to teach source criticism, as well as anyone wanting to learn how to evaluate the credibility of online news themselves.

"Research has shown that anyone can be tricked by fake [news](#), regardless of whether they are a professor or teenager. But it has also shown that there is a reliable method for determining the credibility of news, which we have now "packaged" into a free and simple [tool](#) for anyone to use," said Thomas Nygren, associate professor at Uppsala University in Sweden and lead researcher for the News Evaluator.

The [News Evaluator](#) project started in 2017 as a mass experiment run as part of European Researchers' Night in Sweden, in which thousands of pupils in Sweden helped to assess the credibility of their news feeds. At that time, terms such as alternative facts and [fake news](#) were starting to be regularly used in societal debate.

"The results of the mass experiment showed that the Swedish pupils were mainly accessing credible sources, and that they could use the tool to make valid assessments of the credibility of the news items," commented Thomas Nygren.

New self-test

Subsequently, two more mass experiments were conducted, firstly, to assess political news in the run up to the Swedish general election in 2018, and, secondly, with pupils in Denmark in 2019. Parallel to this, the researchers were investigating what the pupils were learning from using the tool, which aspects of source criticism were the most challenging and how to design the tool to produce the best results.

"The whole project has been a close collaboration between researchers, teachers and pupils, in which everyone has contributed to the

development of the tool. Now we plan to promote the tool so it can be used more widely both in Sweden and abroad," said Hanna Mellin, Project Coordinator for the News Evaluator at the non-profit Swedish organization VA (Public & Science).

The latest addition to the News Evaluator is a self-test, whereby the user is given the task to determine the [credibility](#) of nine real news items shared via social media. Halfway through the test, some feedback is given along with some short instructional videos on how to conduct a news evaluation. The user can then try out their new knowledge on several more news items.

More information: For more information, see nyhetsvarderaren.se/in-english/

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