




Staying Up to Date: Understanding the Media's Role

Media Bias

Media bias is the bias of journalists and news producers in the selection of the events and stories they report and how they are covered. Ask these questions to try to determine if the media you take in is biased.

- **Who are the sources?** Be aware of the personal perspective of the source(s) used. To highlight issues fairly and accurately, media should use a spectrum of sources.
 - **Is there diversity in reporting?** In order to fairly represent different communities, news outlets should represent all members of a community and report multiple sides of an issues.
- 
- **Whose point of view?** Especially in terms of politics, news sources often highlight the “winners” in policy decisions. Does the story cover any negative impacts?
 - **Double Standards and Stereotypes.** Are some individuals held to one standard while others have higher or lower standards? Are misconceptions of one group regularly printed?

Media Bias - Continued

- **What's missing?** What assumptions have been made. What important information might be missing from the story? Watch for lack of context.
- **Buzzwords.** Watch for loaded terminology. The words reporters choose can give an inaccurate impression of the issue, program, or community
- **Does the headline match the story?** Headlines are not always written by the reporter on the story.
- **Fact vs. Opinion.** Guest columns and editorials can easily be confused with factual news. Media sources should indicate whether something is a guest column. If you are uncertain, seek more information



The Danger of Misinformation and Disinformation

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information that is communicated regardless of an intention to deceive. Misinformation can be corrected or retracted.

Disinformation is false or misleading information that is spread *deliberately* to deceive.



Tips for Information Seekers

- **Look for red flags.** If the story you are reading or watching doesn't name any sources, the information may not be verifiable or credible.
- **Too unbelievable.** Read or hear something that seems unbelievable? Don't assume something is true until you find at least two additional independent, credible news sources that corroborate it.



- **Don't just read the headline.** Headlines are written to draw interest, but can oftentimes be misleading. Don't share a piece of information without reading or watching the entire piece.
- **Breaking News.** Brand new information is almost always inaccurate. Follow coverage over time to get the most accurate information.



Staying Informed

- The best information is gathered first hand. By attending public meetings in person, you will hear the conversation first hand.
- If you are unable to attend a meeting in person, request the meeting minutes or recordings, and sign up for newsletters.
- Encourage your municipality to make information easy to find.
- Volunteer for a committee seat.
- Be respectful in your communication to elected officials, municipal staff, and committees.

Your Local Library Can Help

- Library staff are trained to help research and verify information. Staff are also trained to provide factual information regardless of the subject matter.
- Libraries often provide access to multiple local, regional, and national news sources.
- Green County supports 6 community libraries:
 - Albany
 - Belleville
 - Brodhead
 - Monroe
 - Monticello
 - New Glarus

