

Truth Hygiene (for the AI Era)

10 habits to stay grounded when “truth” becomes malleable

Big idea: In the past, we mostly asked: “Who said it?” Now we must ask: “**How do we know it’s true?**”

1) Pause before sharing

If it triggers strong emotion (anger, fear, outrage) → stop. Emotion is how misinformation travels.

New habit: Wait 60 seconds before reposting.

2) Ask: “What is the original source?”

Many viral posts are copies of copies. Look for who first published it, the date/time, and the full context.

3) Separate facts from opinions

Facts: dates, numbers, documents, direct quotes. **Opinions:** motives, blame, certainty about intent.

4) Verify with 2 independent sources

Independent = not copying each other. Best practice: check two reputable sources, especially on health, politics, and disasters.

5) Beware of screenshots as evidence

Screenshots are easy to fake. Prefer links to original sources, official statements, full documents, and credible outlets.

6) Treat virality as a warning sign

Viral ≠ true. Viral often = emotionally optimized.

Rule: The more viral it is, the more verification it needs.

7) Use the “Who benefits?” test

Ask: Who makes money if I believe this? Who gains power? Who wants me angry or afraid?

8) Learn the top manipulation tricks

Watch for phrases like: “They don’t want you to know...”, “Share before it’s deleted...”, “No one is talking about this...”, “Do your research...” (no sources).

9) Understand AI’s role

AI can generate fake photos, voices, articles, and websites.

New norm: No provenance → no confidence.

10) Be proud to say: “I don’t know yet”

Not weakness — strong thinking. Replace “I heard...” with “I’m checking...” or “What’s the evidence?”

The 30-Second Truth Test (quick checklist)

- Did I pause?
- Do I know the original source?
- Is it fact or opinion?
- Do 2 independent sources confirm it?
- Could AI have generated this?
- Who benefits if I believe it?