



Tipsheet by Greg Borowski, PolitiFact Wisconsin Editor
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SEARCHING TIPS -- GOOGLE

- Imagine the source before you search. Ask yourself, who is likely to keep reliable information on this topic?
- Look for links that say “About Us” at the top or bottom of the page to find out more about a Web page. Reputable organizations offer detailed information and contact info.
- Bring the same skepticism to a Web site that you would bring to an in-person interview. Question motives and look for coded language.
- Use double quotes to find exact phrases: “Greg Borowski” or “Wisconsin highways”
- Search specific sites or domains: site:.org “lung cancer” or site:.edu tax expert
- Try Google’s tutorials <https://newslab.withgoogle.com/>
- Try Google’s advanced search: http://www.google.com/advanced_search
- Set up an alert to track a topic of interest: <http://www.google.com/alerts>
- Google's blog search: <https://www.google.com/blogsearch>

SEARCHING THE POLITIFACT ARCHIVES

- There's a search box on the site itself. After searching, you can limit by statement, promise or story. Hint: The search looks ONLY in body text, not bylines or sources.
- Search the site via Google. Use "site:politifact.com" and then your search terms.
- PolitiFact has a subject index. National: <http://www.politifact.com/subjects/>

Finding experts

A few strategies for finding experts.

- Search google on the topic with the word "expert." Limit by "site:.edu"
- Ask a colleague, news researcher or specialist for advice.
- Search academic literature, e.g. <http://www.ssrn.com/> or <http://www.jstor.org/> Email the most promising authors.
- Ask every expert you interview using the above methods if they can recommend anyone else who specializes in your topic.

Books

No, you usually don't have time to read a whole book before you write a fact-check. But search Amazon anyway, then contact the author if appropriate. You can also use Amazon's "Search inside the book" feature to fact-check certain topics.

The PolitiFact Reporter's Checklist

1. Contact the person who said it by email. If no answer, call them. Same for the target of the statement.
2. Check the PolitiFact archives. Assemble jurisprudence.
3. Google it. Search online and in blogs.
4. Do a Nexis search or other specialized database.
5. Find experts, pro and con.
6. Look in books on Amazon or find a library through WorldCat.org
7. Anything else?

OTHER GO TO SOURCES

Congressional Research Service

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/index.html>

The Congressional Research Service writes short but comprehensive reports on every public policy issue before Congress. Technically, they are not public records, but members of Congress routinely release them. The above link is just one site for available reports.

U.S. Census

<http://www.census.gov/>

The U.S. Census has so much data, archived over so many years, that the website depths are almost literally unfathomable. Find a librarian who specializes in the Census to help you or call their media help line at 301-763-3030 or pio@census.gov.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

<http://www.bls.gov/>

More relevant than ever, but similar to the Census in the website can be difficult to navigate for first time users. Their media team will walk you through it, though. Media contacts at

<http://www.bls.gov/newsroom/mediacontacts.htm>

The Center for Responsive Politics

<http://www.opensecrets.org/>

The near-gold standard for federal campaign contributions, because the Federal Elections Commission website is hard to navigate. Here's the "official" site: <http://www.fec.gov/disclosure.shtml>

Also:

National Bureau of Economic Research: <http://www.nber.org/>

Congressional Budget Office: <https://www.cbo.gov/>

Your state Legislative Fiscal Bureau (or comparable entity)