



ONLINE NEWS: Critical Thinking Worksheet

People get their news from a variety of sources. However, 53% of Americans receive their news from online sources, and many agree that this percentage will increase in the future (Pew Research Center 2018).

Draw lines to connect each term on the left with its definition on the right. Have you heard of these terms before?

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Confirmation Bias | “Both sides” journalism; giving equal coverage to all ideas, even those without evidence |
| 2. Bot | A person who starts fights on the Internet to create conflict |
| 3. False Balance | A sensational headline designed to make people click on links to “news,” which are really advertisements |
| 4. Troll | Only accepting information if it confirms what you already know |
| 5. Clickbait | An automated program that can interact with computer systems and websites |



ANSWERS/DISCUSSION

With three or four others, discuss why these concepts are important. Can you think of an example of each term? Do you agree that these concepts are harmful when thinking about how people get their news? Why or why not?

Be sure to follow the rules of **civility** in your discussion: Respect the opinions of others, don't interrupt, and use a quiet voice.

1. **CONFIRMATION BIAS.** This refers to the tendency for people to accept information only when it confirms what they already know or believe.
2. **BOT.** Bots are not real people, but automated responses created by a computer program.
3. **FALSE BALANCE.** News shows like to have two "experts" present opposing "sides" for all stories. However, not all ideas are based on evidence and facts.
4. **TROLL.** A person who starts fights on the Internet to create conflict.
5. **CLICKBAIT.** Clickbait articles attract readers with a sensational headline that is at best misleading and often completely false. The headlines often lead to articles that are really advertisements or other sponsored content.

Your feedback is important to us. Please answer the questions below and add your name and contact information if you would like us to provide you with updates or voter registration information:

1. Was the discussion civil?
2. Do you agree with the answers on the back of the page?
3. What did you like best about the exercise?
4. Was there a part of the exercise that you did not like? Why?
5. Would you like to suggest additional topics? If yes, please list below.

NAME: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION: _____