**The most important thing in a functional society is a well-informed public. What we have now is not only uninformed but misinformed masses.**

How do we combat this problem? Easy, we have to do some work.

**1. Read first. Then share.**I myself am guilty of basing comments or even clicking share based on the headline. This is the worst thing any of us could do. Stop being lazy.

**2. Check the source (and their sources).** In the age of new media true and valid information comes from non-traditional sources but so does a lot of garbage. Any article that posts facts, figures or quotes should provide a source for that information. If there is no backup for their claims, move on.

**3. Watch out for recycled stories.** One thing that seems to be feeding into the misinformation problem is when old stories are being presented as happening now. Check the date on the story before you read on. You’ll be shocked to see how many are from another time and aren’t applicable to the current event you thought they were talking about.

**4. If you care about facts, ignore the blatantly slanted.** Having a slant or taking a position on a story is not wrong in itself. What is wrong is when these ideas are taken as unbiased fact. You can avoid all of this by simply avoiding those sites to start with. Any website with the words: Conservative, Liberal, Democrat, Republican, etc. in the title are just advertising how slanted they are. That’s ok if you choose to live in your side’s bubble but please don’t have any delusions that these stories reflect the whole picture.

**5. Google it.**God (and [Sergey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergey_Brin)) gave us Google for a reason. If you see a story that’s unbelievable or has no sources or even if it does, verify. See if the same facts are reported across multiple outlets. See if anyone disputes these facts. Read these pieces and then make up your mind.

If we could all take these simple steps our society would be a better place. We all have opinions and leanings. There is nothing wrong with that but could we at least all come from a starting point based on facts and reality?

The truth is, sharing illogical things begins to erode YOUR credibility and it makes you look foolish. Trust me, I speak from experience.

-Matt Masuer, “Huffington Post”, 11/14/16