PROJECT LENS

RESOURCE GUIDE 04 OF 06

How to Verify AI Information

See AI clearly.

Think clearly in an AI-powered world.

L	Learn	Understand AI.
E	Evaluate	Question and verify.
N	Navigate	Know when and how to use it.
S	Secure	Protect yourself and others.

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01

Welcome

AI answers often sound confident, even when they are wrong. This guide teaches you a few simple checks, so you can decide for yourself what to trust.

You don't need to be a tech expert to do this. Checking information is a skill, like reading a recipe or balancing a checkbook. It gets easier every time you do it.

How to use this guide

- Start with the seven-question checklist. It works for anything: an AI answer, a news story, a video, or a forwarded message.
- Try the five-minute fact check the next time something surprises you.
- Keep the verification card on the last page next to your computer or tablet.

AI can assist your judgment. It shouldn't replace it.

02

Why AI gets things wrong

AI chatbots predict what a good answer probably looks like. Many can now search the web, and they have gotten much better at finding and checking information. But none of them can promise that what they find is true, so a smooth answer can still be wrong.

Problem	What it looks like	Example
Made-up facts ("hallucinations")	Details that sound real but aren't	A quote no one said, or a law that doesn't exist
Fake sources	Book titles, articles, or links that lead nowhere	"According to a 2021 Harvard study…" that can't be found
Old information	Facts that were true once but changed	Last year's Medicare costs or an old phone number
One-sided answers	Repeats popular or biased views from the internet	Only one side of a health or money question
Mixed-up details	Real facts stuck together wrongly	The right medicine with the wrong dose

The key idea: how sure an answer *sounds* tells you nothing about whether it's *true*. For anything you'll act on, especially health, money, or legal matters, still confirm it with a trusted source.

03

The seven-question checklist

Ask these questions about any AI answer, article, video, or forwarded message. These are the same questions on the Project LENS website.

Ask yourself	What to look for
1. **Who created this information?**	A real person or organization you can name. If you can't tell who made it, be careful.
2. **Can I verify it through another reliable source?**	The same fact on an official or trusted website, not just another copy of the same post.
3. **Does the source actually exist?**	AI sometimes invents books, studies, and links. Search for the source by name.
4. **Is the information current?**	A date on the page. Prices, rules, phone numbers, and medical advice change.
5. **Is the AI providing evidence, or simply sounding confident?**	Real sources, numbers you can check, and clear reasons. Confidence alone is not evidence.
6. **Could this image, voice, or video have been manipulated?**	Anything shocking, urgent, or too good to be true deserves a second look.
7. **Does this decision require expert or human judgment?**	Health, money, legal, and safety decisions belong with a real professional.

If you can't answer "yes" to questions 2 and 3, don't act on it yet.

04

Check a fact in five minutes

Fact-checkers don't read one page more carefully. They open a new tab and see what *other* trusted sources say. This method is called **SIFT**, created by digital literacy expert Mike Caulfield.

1. **STOP.** Before you share, believe, or act, take a breath. Ask: do I know this source? Does this make me feel rushed or upset? Strong feelings are a signal to slow down.
2. **INVESTIGATE the source.** Who is behind it? Open a new tab and search the name of the person, website, or organization. Is it a real news outlet, a government agency, a company selling something, or unknown?
3. **FIND better coverage.** Search the claim itself, not the link you were given. Do trusted sources (news outlets, .gov sites, fact-check sites) report the same thing? If no one else is reporting it, be careful.
4. **TRACE it back to the original.** Quotes, studies, photos, and videos get cut and changed as they spread. Look for where it first appeared, and read it in its full context.

Using an AI chatbot? Add this follow-up to any answer: *"Where did you get this? Please give me links to the original sources."* Then do steps 2 to 4 on those links. This is the CHECK step from the Project LENS prompting recipe: START, IMPROVE, CHECK.

05

Checking the sources AI gives you

When a chatbot lists sources, don't assume they are real or say what the AI claims. Here's how to check each kind.

AI gives you...	How to check it
A link	Read the web address before you click. Does it match the organization's real site (for example, medicare.gov, not medicare-help-now.com)? Does the page open, and does it say what AI said?
A quote	Search the exact words in quotation marks. If you can't find the quote anywhere else, it may be invented.
A study or report	Search the title and the organization's name. Real studies appear on the organization's own site. A study that exists only in the chatbot's answer is a warning sign.
A book or article	Search the title with the author's name, or ask a librarian.
A phone number or email	Never use it for your bank, Medicare, or a company. Get contact details from your card, a bill, or the official website instead.
A number or statistic	Find the original source. Check the year and what exactly was measured.

Trustworthy web addresses often end in .gov (government), .edu (colleges), or belong to well-known organizations. A .com or .org address can be good or bad, so check who runs it.

06

Checking photos, videos, and voices

AI can now create realistic fake photos, videos, and voices (often called "deepfakes"). The best defense is not spotting every flaw. It is checking where the content came from.

Look closely. The FBI suggests watching for:

- Distorted hands or feet, or unrealistic teeth or eyes
- Blurry or irregular faces, and glasses or jewelry that look wrong
- Shadows that don't match the light
- Lag, lips out of sync with the voice, or unnatural movements
- A voice that sounds right but uses words or a tone your loved one wouldn't

Check where it came from.

1. **Search for the image.** Use Google Lens or TinEye (free for personal use) to see where else a photo appears and when it first showed up online. Google's "About this image" tool can also show whether an image may be AI-made, in some areas.
2. **Look for Content Credentials.** Some photos and videos carry a small "CR" label showing how they were made and edited. You can check a file at contentcredentials.org/verify. No label doesn't mean fake; it just means you can't tell this way.
3. **Find the original.** If a video shows a celebrity, official, or news anchor, check their official website or a trusted news outlet. Real announcements appear in more than one place.
4. **For a voice on the phone:** hang up and call the person back on a number you already have, or ask for your family safe word.

A word about "AI detector" tools. Many websites claim to tell you whether something was made by AI. They make mistakes in both directions. OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT, shut down its own AI text detector in 2023 because of its low accuracy. Use these tools as one clue at most, never as proof.

07

Trusted places to check

Type these web addresses yourself, or bookmark them, rather than clicking links in messages.

Ask a real person (free)

Where	What they help with	How to reach them
Answerland (State Library of Oregon)	Oregon librarians answer questions and help with research	Live chat, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in English and Spanish
Multnomah County Library: Ask Us	Research help from librarians	503-988-5123, email, or chat
Multnomah County Library: Tech help	Free one-on-one help with phones, tablets, and websites	Drop-in sessions at library branches
Your local library	Most Oregon libraries offer free research and tech help	Call or visit your branch

Fact-check websites

Site	Run by
FactCheck.org	Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania
PolitiFact	Poynter Institute
Snopes	Independent fact-checking site, good for viral rumors and photos

Official sources for common questions

Topic	Where to check
Health and medicine	MedlinePlus (National Library of Medicine), and your doctor or pharmacist
Medicare	Medicare.gov, 1-800-633-4227, or Oregon SHIBA at 1-800-722-4134
Social Security	SSA.gov
Oregon services and rules	Oregon.gov
Scams and consumer issues	Oregon DOJ Consumer Protection, 1-877-877-9392

08

Practice: spot the problem

Read each made-up example. Which checklist question would catch the problem? Answers are below each one.

1. The confident study

> *"A 2022 Stanford study found that drinking two cups of green tea a day cuts memory loss by 70%."*

What to check: Does the source actually exist? Search "Stanford green tea memory 2022." If no such study appears on Stanford's site or in news coverage, treat the claim as unverified. A very large, exact number with no link is a warning sign.

2. The helpful phone number

> *"You can reach Medicare's fraud department at 1-888-555-0199."*

What to check: Never use a phone number from AI. The real number is 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227), listed on Medicare.gov.

3. The out-of-date answer

> *"The standard Medicare Part B premium is $135.50 a month."*

What to check: Is the information current? Costs change every year. Check Medicare.gov for this year's amount.

4. The shocking video

> A video on social media shows a famous TV doctor saying a new pill "reverses aging" and to "order before midnight."

What to check: Could this video have been manipulated? Urgency plus a miracle product is a classic sign. Look for the doctor's official website or trusted news coverage. Real health breakthroughs don't launch through social media ads.

Try it yourself: ask any chatbot a question you already know the answer to. Then ask, "Where did you get that?" and check its sources.

09

Verification card

Cut out and keep by your computer or tablet.

Project LENS Verification Card

Who created this? Can I name a real person or organization?

Can I verify it through another reliable source?

Does the source exist? Search the study, book, or quote by name.

Is it current? Look for a date.

Evidence or confidence? Sounding sure is not proof.

Could it be manipulated? Shocking, urgent, or too good to be true? Check the original.

Does it need an expert? Health, money, and legal decisions go to a real professional.

Never use phone numbers or links from AI. Find them yourself.

Ask a librarian free, 24/7: answerland.org

Scam help in Oregon: Oregon DOJ 1-877-877-9392

Project LENS: Learn. Evaluate. Navigate. Secure. projectlensai.org

This guide is for education only. It is not legal, financial, or medical advice.

AI changes quickly. We review this guide every six months. For the newest version, visit projectlensai.org.

Sources: Mike Caulfield: SIFT (The Four Moves) · FBI IC3 PSA I-120324-PSA (Dec 2024) · OpenAI: AI classifier discontinued (2023) · FTC: Chatbots, deepfakes, and voice clones (2023) · Content Credentials · Answerland

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