

# Handout 2: BS Detector Analysis Worksheet

## Data BS Detector Workshop

Dayton Democracy Summit | October 27, 2025

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### Analyzing a Suspicious Data Claim

Use this worksheet to systematically evaluate any data claim. Work through all four steps, then prepare to share your findings with the group.

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### THE CLAIM

**Write the exact claim you're analyzing:**

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**Where did you encounter this claim?**

- City council meeting  Social media  News article  Community meeting
- Conversation  Presentation  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Who made this claim?**

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### STEP 1: SNIFF TEST

**Check all the red flags you notice:**

- Missing baseline/context** - No comparison point
- Cherry-picked timeframe** - Convenient start/end dates
- Misleading visualization** - Manipulated chart/graph
- Correlation ≠ causation** - Claims X causes Y without proof
- No citation** - "Studies show..." with no source
- Suspiciously round numbers** - Too clean/perfect
- Percentages without absolute numbers** - Or vice versa
- Comparing apples to oranges** - Unfair comparison

**Sampling bias** - Unrepresentative group

**Other red flag:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the specific red flags:**

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**Initial gut reaction: Does this claim seem...**

Probably accurate  Possibly misleading  Definitely BS  Need more info

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## **STEP 2: SOURCE VERIFICATION**

**Did the claim cite a source?**

Yes → What source? \_\_\_\_\_

No → Red flag!

**Can you find the original source?**

Yes → URL or citation: \_\_\_\_\_

No → Where did you look? \_\_\_\_\_

**Who conducted the research/study?**

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**Who funded it? (Follow the money!)**

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**Does the person/org making the claim have an agenda or bias?**

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**Does the claim match what the original source actually says?**

Yes, it's accurate

Partially - it's missing context

No - it misrepresents the source

Can't tell - couldn't access the original

**Explain:**

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### **Source credibility assessment:**

- High (peer-reviewed, govt agency, established org)
  - Medium (think tank, news outlet, NGO)
  - Low (blog, social media, can't verify)
  - None (no source provided)
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## **STEP 3: SEEK ALTERNATIVES**

### **What other sources did you check?**

#### **Source 1:**

Name/URL: \_\_\_\_\_

What they said: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **Source 2:**

Name/URL: \_\_\_\_\_

What they said: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **Source 3:**

Name/URL: \_\_\_\_\_

What they said: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Did you check fact-checking sites?**

- Snopes
- PolitiFact
- FactCheck.org
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What did they say?** \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Do sources generally agree or disagree?**

- Most sources agree with the claim
- Most sources contradict the claim
- Sources are mixed/contradictory
- Can't find enough alternative sources

### What's the consensus (if any)?

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## STEP 4: COMPARE & CONTRAST

Based on your analysis, rate your confidence level:

Confidence	Check One	Why?
<b>HIGH</b> - Multiple credible sources agree	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>MODERATE</b> - Some agreement, but limitations	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>LOW</b> - Conflicting info or weak sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>NONE</b> - Not enough information to conclude	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Explain your confidence rating:

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## YOUR CONCLUSION

The original claim is:

- ACCURATE** - Supported by evidence
- MISLEADING** - Contains truth but lacks important context
- FALSE** - Contradicted by credible sources
- UNVERIFIABLE** - Can't find enough evidence

In one sentence, what's the truth?

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**What's the most important thing someone should know about this claim?**

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## **PREPARE YOUR 2-MINUTE PRESENTATION**

**What will you tell the group?**

**1. The Claim** (10 seconds)

Quick summary of what you analyzed

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**2. Red Flags** (20 seconds)

What made you suspicious?

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**3. What You Found** (60 seconds)

Key findings from your investigation

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**4. Your Conclusion** (30 seconds)

Is it accurate, misleading, false, or unverifiable? Why?

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## **REFLECTION**

**What was hardest about this analysis?**

- Finding the original source
- Evaluating source credibility

- Finding alternative sources
- Deciding on a conclusion
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **What surprised you?**

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**Will you use this process again?**  Definitely  Probably  Maybe  No

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### **Questions? Need help fact-checking?**

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### **Code for Dayton**