# How to Recognize Bias

***Bias*** is defined as prejudice for or against someone or something as compared to another. You can also think of it as partiality or one-sidedness.

Sometimes, authors and even organizations are biased. Recognizing bias is an important skill in reading critically because it helps you realize what information may be skewed, misrepresented, or missing; it also helps you become a more educated and informed citizen, with a more complete picture of the issue at hand.

So how do you recognize bias? Here are some steps to follow:

1. **Look at the organization that is printing the story.** Is the source credible? Was the source written for a general audience? Some news organizations are known to favor a particular viewpoint. The *New York Times* or *Buzzfeed*, for example, tend to be more liberal, while *Fox News* and *Breitbart* tend to hold more conservative views. Keep this in mind as you read, and be on the alert for biased statements.

2. **Analyze the author's word choice.** Is the language used neutral and factual? Or is the author's opinion infused? Are qualitative terms, like *horrible* or *great*, used when describing people or events? What other words does the author use that have either positive or negative connotations? Terms like *Social Justice Warrior* or *Tea Party Patriot*, for example, are derisive terms and have negative connotations. If an author uses these words, it is an indication that they are biased.

3. **Question and dig deeper when studies and/or statistics are given.** If a statistic is presented as a fact (e.g., More than 50% of people are disengaged at work), question it! Where did the statistic come from? Who conducted the study? Who funded it? How large was the sample size? Sometimes, authors can selectively use statistics to spin the truth, so it's always better to be critical!

4. **Take note of what information is missing.** Sometimes authors omit facts in order to further their viewpoint. When reading an article, ask yourself: Did the author leave a big question unanswered? Is there a source that is missing or a side that is not represented?

5. **Determine the overall tone of the article.** Does the text provoke a certain type of feeling? News articles should be neutral and present readers with the facts. If you read an article and feel as though the tone of it is clearly positive or negative, then the author is biased.

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