

When you are working to verify an image or video that has emerged on social media obviously the first thing you need to ascertain is whether the event actually took place. If the image shows an explosion that was alleged to have taken place in London minutes before, you need to ensure that the event actually happened. But once you know that you can start to verify the particular image or video.

First draft recommends using the following checklist. And this module is organized around these checks. Firstly provenance. Are you looking at the original piece of content? You must always run this check first. If you're not looking at the original, all of the metadata will be incorrect.

Secondly source. Who created the piece of content? Not who uploaded the content but who captured it originally. Many people have pretty big comprehensive digital footprints these days and it's amazing what you can learn about somebody by connecting the dots between that different social accounts. You are trying to ascertain two things. One through your search can you find contact information for them as you really want to talk to them directly.

But secondly from their social media posts. Does it make sense that they were actually near the location that the event took place. The third check is date. When was the content captured? Not when was the image or video uploaded.

And this can often be pretty hard to ascertain, but newsrooms have often got caught out assuming that the upload date was when the footage was originally captured. With the rise of smartphones, it's increasingly the case that people upload footage immediately after an event has taken place. But you cannot assume that that's the case.

The fourth check is location. While sometimes you can see a location connected to a particular Tweet, Facebook, or Instagram post as you will learn this can be easily manipulated. So you always want to independently find the location of a photo or video on a map or satellite image. This can often be the most rewarding part of the verification process.

Finally we remind you to think about the motivation of the person who captured the footage. Like any other type of journalism understanding the motivations of your source is very important. It could be that the person who captured the footage was an accidental eyewitness. They just happened to be in a particular place as events unfolded but they might also be an activist who went to the event to capture events from a particular perspective. Or it could be that the footage was captured by a field officer working for the UN. Again it doesn't make the footage worthless but it's a particular perspective that needs to be part of the storytelling.

At First Draft we created two checklist one for working with images and another for working with video. The checklists allow you to work through each of these five questions. And we suggest possible answers to each question. Each answer is linked to a level of certainty. So when you've finished answering your five checks, you can get a sense of how confident you should be about running the image or video or sharing it further over social media.

It might be the case that you're 100 percent certain of the location of an image but you can't be 100 percent certain that you have the original version. Or you might have some concerns that the person who uploaded the image wasn't the person who originally captured it.

Breaking down your verification like this ensures that you investigate all aspects of an image or video.