

Bellingcat's Fact-check Starter Pack

Verifying digital information has become the main pillar of open source digital investigations and it's an essential part of fact-checking. With enough time and proper training, anyone can learn the principles of image verification, which can be a good weapon to defy disinformation. To help you getting started, Bellingcat selected a couple of sources that might be helpful during your verification and research process. These sources can make your work process more efficient and might help with determining topics for fact-checks. Knowing how to verify digital information can lead to important discoveries, showing the steps of your thorough investigation, which helps build trust with your audience.

1. Reverse Image Search (video & pictures)

One of the most prominent and useful sources of digital information is visual data. Before the existence of social media platforms, people had to wait for visual data to filter through media organisations into their homes via television sets. Today, anyone can find pictures and videos from important events around the world within seconds, maybe even before journalists see them. If you want to know if the picture was posted on the internet before, or even try to find a certain location, this is a first step that could save you a lot of time:

- [Google Lens](#)
Using Google Lens to search the internet for a certain image. This tool can also be used to translate text in a picture. A reverse image search is an import first step of verification.
- [InVID](#) (extension)
An extension that can be downloaded for Chrome and Safari, providing services to detect, authenticate and check the reliability and accuracy of newsworthy video files and video content that are spread via social media.
- [RevEye](#) (extension)
An extension for Google Chrome, which allows you to perform a search by image. You can choose between the image search engines Google, Bing, Yandex, and TinEye.



2. Smart Google Searches

Being able to create the right search string while using Google can be incredibly useful and saves a huge amount of time. There are several [websites](#) that will give you an idea of what you can do with Google (and other search operators). A good example of using Google for finding information is [this article](#) by Foeke Postma.

3. Social Media

It's much more difficult to provide good suggestions for social media tools because the developers change them often. This makes some helpful tools useless overnight. The Bellingcat toolkit and website has a few tools and guides that might be helpful. Moreover, Bellingcat's Investigative Tech Team has created the [Bellingcat TikTok Analysis Tool](#) that allows researchers to collect a dataset of TikToks associated with specific hashtags over lengthier periods. The tool also allows researchers to analyse what other topics appear together with selected hashtags most frequently. You can read more about the tool right [here](#).

4. Geolocations (beginner guide)

Determining where a picture was taken might not provide you with a clear yes/no answer for a factcheck, but it could provide a good step into the direction of that answer. If a picture was taken in a completely different location than somebody claims it to be, you might need to be cautious about other provided information. Tools that are often used for geolocations are [Google Maps](#) and [Google Earth Pro](#), both of which are free. A beginner guide for some geolocations can be found [here](#).

5. [Uniform Timezone Extension](#) (extension)

This extension converts and decodes, where possible, complete upload/post date-time values into standard timezones (like UTC or your machine's local timezone) and allows the conversion to any other timezone, besides exporting/copying all values. The extension can currently be used on Twitter, TikTok, Discord, and Instagram



6. [FactRank](#)

FactRank monitors public debate for check-worthy statements via subtitles, transcripts and social media. However, FactRank is not an automatic fact-checker, whether the statement is correct or not has to be decided by a fact-checker.

7. [Google Fact Check Explorer](#)

The Fact Check Tools consist of two tools: **Fact Check Explorer** and **Fact Check Markup Tool**. Both tools aim to facilitate the work of fact-checkers, journalists and researchers. You can search by keywords and see a list of matching claims and the corresponding fact checks.

8. Archiving websites

Archiving websites like [Wayback Machine](#) or [Archive.today](#) are a good resource to find pages that might have been deleted. Not every page can be found of course, but it's always worth checking. The Wayback Machine also has its own Chrome extension.

If you want to archive pages, you can use the extension and websites mentioned above. If you want to create your own archive from a google sheet, you can also use the [Bellingcat auto-archiver](#). For one-off archives you can also use [Bellingcat's auto-archiver extension](#).

9. [Benedmo Fact-check Finder](#)

This is an extension available on Chrome. When highlighting a piece of text, you can click on this extension and it will search through a database of Dutch/Flemish fact-checks and display them to the user.

10. Benedmo Fact-check Database

The BENEDMO Factcheck Database is a centralised fact-checking database designed to aggregate and compare information from multiple well-established sources, with the aim of debunking misinformation. The BENEDMO Factcheck Database allows users to search for factchecks from more than 100 recognised organisations in more than 20 languages.



11. [Name variants generation and search tool](#)

When researching an individual online, it is useful to search not only for their full legal name but also for variants such as middle names or nicknames. However, this can become tedious and time consuming for the researcher. When given a set of names, this search tool displays all search results which exactly match for any one of the names.

12. [WolframAlpha](#)

A computational search engine, on which you can ask specific questions.

Example: you are asked to factcheck a picture that was allegedly taken on June 1st, 2000 and you identified the location as Amsterdam. In the picture you can see that the sun is shining with a clear blue sky and you want to check what the weather was like on that day.

[The Bellingcat Toolkit](#)

If you want to explore Bellingcat's full list of useful tools for open source research, you can head over to the [Bellingcat Online Investigation Toolkit](#). Here you can find a collection of tools divided into different sections, as well as useful articles and guides.



Bellingcat's Online Investigation Toolkit

bit.ly/bcattools | last update: August 2023

Welcome to Bellingcat's freely available online open source investigation toolkit.

This toolkit includes satellite and mapping services, tools for verifying photos and videos, websites to archive web pages, and much more.

Follow Bellingcat's work via the website or through social media. We provide workshops to familiarize with these tools, and learn open source investigative methods.

Feel free to suggest tools via email (contact@bellingcat.com) or Twitter (@trbrtc); Giancarlo Fiorella ([@gianfiorella](mailto:giancarlo@bellingcat.com)); Foeke Postma (@foekepostma)
 Tools marked in yellow are the most used per category by Bellingcat.

Just getting started? Read these:

[First Steps to Getting Started in Open Source Research](#)

[A Beginners Guide to Social Media Verification](#)

Bellingcat links:

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Bellingcat's Online Investigation Toolkit which provides you with tools for verifying photos and videos, websites to archive web pages, satellite and mapping services, and much more.



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