

Fact checks:

Research recommendations and checklist

Step 1: Production

- ☐ **Act fast.** People are more likely to believe the things we hear repeated. Fact-check early to reduce the likelihood of inaccurate claims being repeated.
 - ☐ **Seek corrections.** Ask claimants to correct on the record and publish the correction in the original fact-check. Fact-checks are significantly more effective when they come from the same source who produced the misinformation to begin with.
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Step 2: Content


- ☐ Don't stop at saying that something is wrong. **Explain why**, and tell your audiences what the correct answer is if you have it, to update their knowledge for the long-term.
- ☐ Don't phrase your headline as a question. Phrase it as **the answer** you wish audiences to remember.
- ☐ Check that every headline has, where possible:
 - **A clear object.** (Avoid indeterminate references like "This picture" or "This post" and instead use more descriptive references like "A viral post")
 - **A claim.** (To get readers to update their beliefs, we need to refute – link back to/ challenge the original claim)
 - A clear **verdict** on the claim's accuracy.
 - An **explanation** for the verdict.
- ☐ **Be transparent** about what you don't know – but **specify where uncertainty lies**. As fact checkers, we have a duty to be clear about evidence gaps. But be specific when you reference uncertainty, to **avoid leaving readers with the feeling that nothing can be trusted**.

Step 3: Format

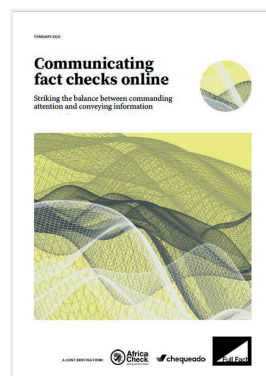
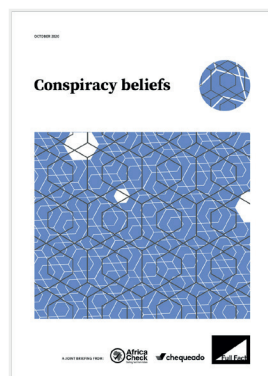
- ☐ An image can draw attention on social media. But text is best for conveying information.
- ☐ **Only include images that support your conclusions.** An image which mirrors the conclusions of a fact-check can make it easier to remember, but an image that tells a different story than the text can undermine its conclusions.
- ☐ Use **a clean layout** that doesn't distract your audiences. Side adverts, pop ups, and other elements can all divert attention from your fact check.
- ☐ Use short, single column paragraphs.

Step 4: Publicity

- ☐ Try to focus on disinformation your audiences might have heard rather than overamplifying unsubstantiated claims. When you publicise a fact check, you are also giving the claim renewed exposure – especially if you bring it to the attention of people who wouldn't see it otherwise. **So always ask yourself: is the claim worth the attention?** Is there a fire to put out, or are we adding to the smoke?

CHECKLIST SUMMARISED FROM OUR BRIEFING:  **Researching misinformation**

Further reading:



Full Fact
London

 fullfact.org



Africa Check
Johannesburg

 africacheck.org

Chequeado
Buenos Aires

 chequeado.com