# More Fact-Checking Tips

1. **Read!**

2. **Listen!**

3. **Watch!**

In other words, PAY ATTENTION to as much news and info as you can. Constantly. Stay alert for possible leads, angles and SOURCES for your reporting. For example, if you were listening to NPR recently, you would have heard a story about the presidential candidates' health care plans that mentioned, among other things, a study by the Congressional Budget Office. Bingo! You now know that the CBO is a place to find independent, non-partisan info on some important issues, such as health care.

4. **Exercise your curiosity.**
When you hear a candidate – or anyone, for that matter – say something, be curious about the details. If an ad comes out by, for example, a group calling itself Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, you should automatically be curious enough to ask: Who are these folks? How much first-hand knowledge to they have? Where do they get their money? When someone says, for example, "Social Security is going broke," be curious about what that means: Just what is Social Security? How is it funded? Why was it started? Who benefits? What does "going broke" mean, exactly?

5. **Sensitize your B.S. detectors.**
 Broad, sweeping statements – such as "Social Security is going broke" or "More jobs have been lost under Bush than any president since Herbert Hoover" – should make you automatically skeptical.

6. **Be attentive to the language of claims.**
Some phrases are emotionally loaded: "government-run" vs. "public," for example. When you hear or read emotionally loaded language, try to sort out the emotion and get to simpler, clearer facts. Medicare, for example, is the public, tax-supported health care program for the elderly and the disabled. Is it "government-run"? What, exactly, does the phrase mean?

7. **Check the context of claims and attacks.**
Read at least the paragraph before and after. Snippets can be easily distorted.

8. **Keep files (or check Nexis) of background info on issues and claims.**
Sure, we all have Velcro memories, in which everything sticks. Right? Files are better. Nexis is a quick way to find a source to sort out the background, sharpen the memory. But beware: Don't let all this easy access to other people's stories and reporting tempt you into PLAGIARISM. Be sure to label the source of any info you collect in your background notes. You'll want to backtrack to the original source that other reporters used. And if you do use another journalist's work, you MUST attribute it!

9. **Develop a list/network of reliable resources.**
You owe your audience the BEST info you can get on something, not just a confusing collection of contradictory statistics and claims. Yes, there are policy and politics think-tanks with ideological leanings. Beware of those leanings. Tell your audience what those leanings

are. Look for non-partisan, non-ideological resources. Yes, those are getting harder to find. But LOOK, anyway. If it's a Web site, bookmark it so you can get there quickly on deadline. Some resources:

**Government agencies:** Sometimes, they can be full of surprisingly impartial data.
Congressional Budget Office
Government Accountability Office
Social Security Administration
Office of Management and Budget
Census Bureau

 **Universities:**  Many have independent scholars who spend their lives studying things like taxes, poverty, health care.

**Research organizations:** Some are also advocacy groups. Beware of that. Lay it out for your audience. Some of the better known ones:
Urban Institute
National Bureau of Economic Research (this is fairly technical, but its economists can often translate the jargon).
Tax Policy Center
Employee Benefits Research Institute
Kaiser Family Foundation

**10. Read! Watch! Listen!**

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