

# NewsFeed Defenders

a game guide for teachers

*NewsFeed Defenders* is a challenging game that engages players with the standards of journalism, showing you how to spot examples of the viral deception we all face today, in all its forms. Join a fictional social media site focused on news and information, and meet the challenge to protect the site's integrity. This can only be achieved by spotting dubious posts that try to sneak in hidden ads, viral deception, and false reporting. In addition to maintaining a high-quality site, you are charged with growing traffic while keeping the posts on topic. As you play you'll level up from *guest user* to *site admin* and unlock new ways to engage with the community.



## Learning Objectives

- Identify markers of accuracy, transparency, trustworthiness, and impartiality in news stories.
- Define and identify problematic news items, and other news-related types of misinformation.
- Explain a variety of strategies to verify images and information.
- Evaluate text for bias based on word choices and framing methods.
- Use third-party information to judge the credibility of a source.

Check out our Extension Pack for more resources!

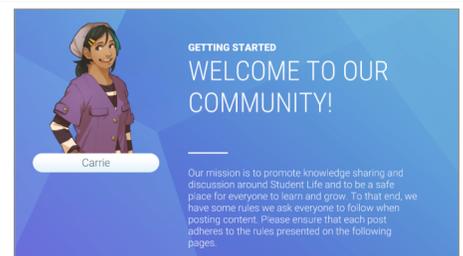
## Prerequisites

None needed! *NewsFeed Defenders* is designed for students to apply critical thinking skills to scenarios while learning about the elements of high-quality journalism and markers of deceptive posts. The last page of this guide has pre- and post-game questions to help you lead discussions with your class. Find additional resources, including lesson plans and more games at [www.iCivics.org/teachers](http://www.iCivics.org/teachers).

## HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

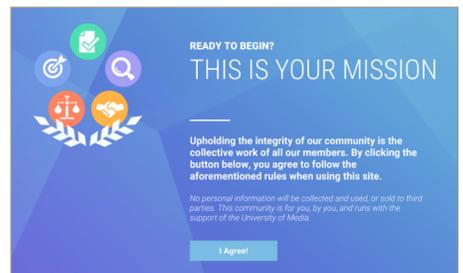
### 1. Select Your Avatar and Join a Community

When the game starts, you are given six avatars from which to choose. Give him or her a name, and then select which Newsably community you'd like to join. Each will offer posts and news that center on these basic subjects.



### 2. Get Onboarded

The "getting started" screens are important! They explain how Newsably works and get you on the right track to becoming an expert at differentiating good content from bad. It's all in the next seven screens.



### 3. Take the Tour of Newsably

If this is your first time playing the game, make sure to take the tour and learn how to play. Text will pop up and tour you around Newsably.

### 4. Be Our Guest!

Starting out as a Newsably guest, check out the newsfeed and tutorial feature posts as you get to know your way around the site.



### HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

#### 5. Jump In, Engage, and Level Up!

Act on the following features of Newsably to impact the community's metrics and create the best experience for you and other users.



#### Read and Investigate Posts

Investigation is the key to figuring out whether news is real or deceptive. Each investigation takes its own amount of time, but it's worth it!



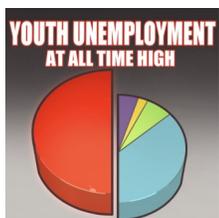
#### Read and Post Comments

Comments let you see what others in the community are saying about a post. It's a great way to engage in the community and inform Newsably on the kinds of posts you want to see.

Leave a negative comment and you'll see less posts like that. Leave a positive comment and see more.

#### Post Your Own News

You can contribute your own posts to the community, but make sure they follow all the rules for Newsably.



#### Approve Posts

After you've reviewed a post you can approve it. This can help you keep track of where you've been. You can always return to it if you see something problematic later.



#### Report Posts

If you've investigated a post and found that it breaks one or more of Newsably's rules, you can report it.

Often posts will violate multiple rules. Investigate as thoroughly as you can in order to find all of the violations in play during the time given.



#### Feature Posts

If you have found a great post that has the potential to go viral, you can feature it on one of two slots on the right. This grabs more traffic and can really boost your metrics... as long as the content is high quality.

## The Roles

**Guests** can *view* posts on the feed and get a feel for the site. After you read a few posts, try out your ability to *investigate*. This will let you research elements of a post, which will come in handy soon.

**Members** can *comment* on posts. Your comments can influence what kinds of things people are likely to post. By choosing your comments wisely, you can change our community's culture for the better. You can also *post* things to the site yourself!

**Moderators** can (and should!) *report* or *flag* posts that do not follow the site rules. This is where that investigative ability comes in! When reporting a post, you'll need to specify which site rules were violated. There may be more than one rule broken!

**Curators & Admins** have earned the ability to *feature* posts. This can help (or hurt) your metrics a lot, so use it wisely.

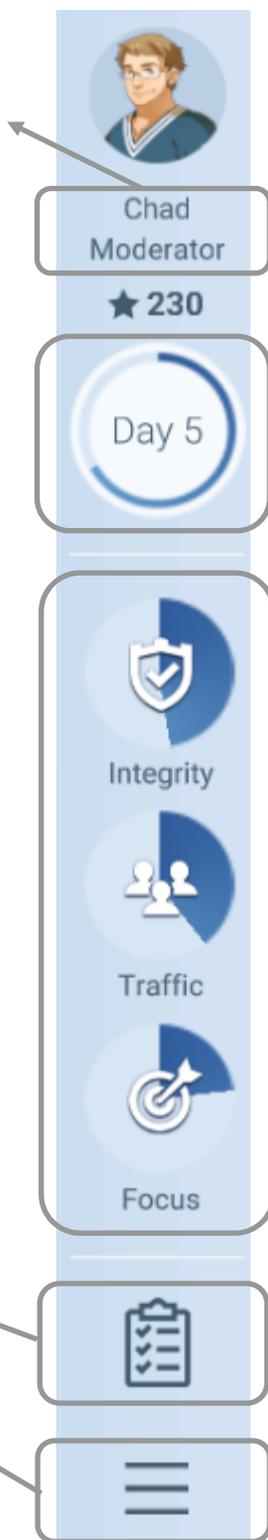


## Pull-Out Rules Menu

The check list icon allows you to pull out the list of rules for a quick check as you read and review posts. More about the rules on the next page.

## Settings Menu

Adjust sound settings from this icon: volume (music and sound effects), and even the music track.



## Things Take Time

Most of the things you can do on Newsably take time, and time is your only resource. The green part of the gauge indicates how much time the action will take. Once the gauge is full, you'll need to select "End Day" to continue.

You have two "weeks" to improve the site metrics. So be sure to spend your time wisely!



## The Metrics

The health of your Newsably community depends on a combination of three metrics: Integrity, Traffic, and Focus.

**Integrity\*** measures the site's reputation as a reliable source of information. To raise it, ensure all posts obey the rules about accuracy, transparency, trustworthiness, and impartiality.

**Traffic** measures the site's popularity, or how many people are visiting. To raise it, favor posts with the "Trending Now" tag.

**Focus** measures how closely site content adheres to the site's topic. To raise it, ensure all posts are on topic.

\*Your goal is to fill your Integrity meter completely and get the other two as full as possible.

## The Rules - Take Note!

The rules for posts on Newsably are inspired by the standards of journalism. Review the rules below, and check out the notes that provide hints as to what to look for as you spot and report the posts that should be removed from the site. And guess what? These rules apply to the real world, too!

### Site Rules

*We have some rules we ask everyone to follow when posting content.*

-  **Accuracy**  
Posts must contain accurate facts and information. Sources are cited and claims can be independently verified.
-  **Transparency**  
Posts must clearly communicate their purpose. Opinion pieces, sponsored content, and advertisements are labeled.
-  **Trustworthiness**  
Posts must come from a trustworthy source, such as a respected news source or knowledgeable expert.
-  **Impartiality**  
Posts must address multiple sides of issues. Opinions are great, but they need to show the whole picture.
-  **Focus**  
Posts must be on topic. Posts not related to the Student Life community may be removed.

Beware of quotes without attributions, facts you can't verify with a quick internet search, and claims that have no proof.

Don't be fooled by sneaky ads, quizzes that just mine for your personal information, or opinion pieces pretending to offer fair and balanced reporting.

Deception can come in many forms. False sources, experts, and even institutions can be used to gain your trust.

Only telling one side of a story is one way people try to mislead. Good opinion pieces give you both sides, then argue for one or the other.

You and the other members are here for one thing: news and information about your topic of interest. Anything off topic will hurt your community's reputation.

## ANATOMY OF A POST

Each post delivers a lot of information—regardless if it is a super-short meme or a longer article. Make the most of it as you play through the game.

**Newsably community member that posted this to the site** (points to Buzzz\_Bee profile)

**Original author and source of the post** (points to Ryan Chen | Barnett College News)

**Traffic information includes comment count, and how many likes & dislikes the post has gathered. (Helpful when you are able to feature posts)** (points to engagement icons)

**Your menu of available actions will grow as you level up in the game. Check the time costs and pay close attention to what you learn in the investigations.** (points to Available Actions menu)

**And remember that posts can break more than one rule!** (points to Report Rule Violations)

**Post statuses include: normal, trending, flagged for removal, and approved.** (points to Normal Post status)

## A NOTE ON CONTENT

All of the content within the posts (authors, sources, individuals) are fictional. They were written to best represent—and occasionally break—the standards of journalism. Some posts may reference real government agencies and organizations as well as legitimate statistics, but we urge you to triple-check your facts before you cite anything from this game in the real world.

**NEWSFEED DEFENDERS**

PLAY TIME	IMPACT POINTS	DATE
21:04 Finished on Day 14	★ 3900	September 25, 2018

METRICS			PERFORMANCE		
Integrity 100%	Traffic 100%	Focus 100%	Site Rule	Reported Correctly	Total Violations
			Accuracy	4	9
			Transparency	5	7
			Trustworthiness	7	13
			Impartiality	2	6
			Focus	1	5

**ACTIVITY**  
 Investigated 2 times  
 Reported 10 posts  
 Commented 0 times  
 Posted 1 new post  
 Featured 5 posts

KayRay  
www.icivics.org

## THE GAME CERTIFICATE

When the game ends, you can view and print a game certificate that shows how you managed your Newsably community.



## CLASSROOM CONVERSATION STARTERS

### Pre-Game Questions

You can use these questions to lead into playing *NewsFeed Defenders* in the classroom.

- What role does social media have in your life? What kind of information do you gain from it?
- What are some different roles or groups on a social media site?
  - ◊ *Guest/Visitor - someone who isn't a member but just looks around*
  - ◊ *Member - someone who engages with the content (likes, up/down vote, retweets, shares, comments, etc.)*
  - ◊ *Moderator & Admin - a member that has the ability to moderate (or manage) posts and actions by other members*
  - ◊ *Private, Community, or Class Groups - allows for access to be restricted based on the sites purpose*
- What kind of rules might a social media site have for its users? How might they differ if they were a site that focused on delivering the news?
- What are the risks of believing everything you read on the internet?
- How often do you fall for false reporting, internet rumors, or hoaxes? Why do they seem so believable?

### Post-Game Questions

Use these questions as a way to debrief the individual experiences of playing *NewsFeed Defenders*.

- What helped you decide whether or not a post should be reported? Did you get better at spotting bad posts as the game went on?
- Were any of the posts particularly challenging? Spotting any particular rules harder than the others? Why might that be the case?
- How easy/hard do you expect this kind of high-quality review to be in the real world, outside of the game?
- How can you take what you've learned to do in this game to your own social media behavior?

### Activity Ideas

Looking to extend the learning experience? Here are a few ideas to get you and your students started.

- Invite local journalists to class and ask them to share their experiences as reporters. Then have them share what impact false news and viral deception has had on their industry.
- Ask students for examples of other "bad posts" from their daily dose of social media and web surfing and have them use the rules of the game to identify problematic elements using FactCheck.org and other similar sites.

The **NewsFeed Defenders Extension Pack** is now available! Make your students' game play more meaningful with activities designed specifically for NewsFeed Defenders. This easy-to-use resource set means deeper learning for students and best practices around game-centered learning for you! Extension Packs require PowerPoint and are designed for use with projectors or interactive whiteboards. Find this great resource linked in the game page or in our lesson plans.

