CHECKLIST

The critical thinking checklist: Before you trust anything

A simple checklist of questions to ask yourself before trusting information you encounter online. Not to become paranoid — but to tell the difference between presentation and substance.

The critical thinking checklist: Before you trust anything

Use these questions next time you encounter a claim, article, "tip," or "scientific finding" online:

THE PRESENTATION

- [ ] Why is this presented this way? Academic layout? Authoritative tone? Impressive title?
- [ ] Would this be less convincing if it were presented differently?
- [ ] Do the sources actually exist, or just named?

THE TRUTH

- [ ] If this were true, what would need to be the case?
- [ ] Has anyone actually shown this evidence, or just said it?
- [ ] Are there opposing views or research?
- [ ] Is this too good to be true?

THE MOTIVE

- [ ] Who benefits if I believe this?
- [ ] Is the person selling something?
- [ ] Is this an opinion or a fact? (Often mixed without marking.)
- [ ] Does the source have any particular education or experience for this?

YOUR OWN ROLE

- [ ] Am I tired, stressed, or emotional right now? (We buy more easily when we are.)
- [ ] Does this information already align with my existing opinion? (We trust it more easily.)
- [ ] How long would it take to actually verify this?
- [ ] Is it worth that time?

The point

You don't need to verify everything. But when something claims to be scientific, authoritative, or "everyone knows that..." — it's worth a few minutes of skepticism.