



## Why news matters

### What is news?

We are all interested in news, right? 'I'm not', you say, 'it's boring, I'm not interested'. Well, I bet there are some reading this who are interested in the Premier League, fashion, the GAA, celebrities, rugby, or music, and you want information about those areas that interest you. That information must be new – there is no point in telling you something you knew already – and as accurate as possible – there is no point in having an inaccurate match score. Many of you either come from countries other than Ireland, or your families do: Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, or even next door in Britain. Sometimes you want to know what's going on at home, what's going on in your city, town or village.

All of that is news, and that news must give you an understanding of what is happening, must be true, and must give you information as quickly as possible. And that's not a bad definition of news.

But the issue for many of us, as we look at our phones, our iPads, TVs and newspapers, is that it is so hard to know what is real and what is fake. Those tweets, that Facebook post, the news you hear on the car radio, that video on You Tube, that blogger, what's real? People tell you things and swear they are true. It seems the more we hear and see, the less trustworthy it is.

So can you trust anything or should you just give up, accepting that there

is no way of differentiating. Well no, that would be dangerous, because we make decisions based on what we see and read, everything from what film to see, to how to vote (if over 18-years-of-age) or what subjects to take at school, based on education advice on a newspaper education page. Our views on the courts, the Gardai, politicians, or even footballers, is based on what we read, hear and see, whether on social media or in a newspaper, so knowing who and what to trust is important.

We need to learn how to interrogate all that information out there. What kind of content you are looking at – is it news, a feature, an opinion piece, a sports story, a blog post, a personal post on social



Holding the Party Line by Gerry Mooney

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media, a rumour, or someone’s opinion? Where did it come from? Is there a name attached? Does the journalist say where the information came from? What’s its source? What was the writer’s motivation? What evidence was provided? Was it fair to all involved?

You need to be able to trust the content you receive. Newspapers, either in print or online have trained journalists in newsrooms and are regulated. Most have signed up to a code of ethics, they try to be transparent, but they are not all the same. Every day, news organisations will offer a range of news but it will differ. The main story might be about the economy in one, a murder in another and the housing crisis

in a third. All three stories are important, and should be reported. Different types of newspapers or radio stations or TV stations, online or not, will give a different account of the world we live in. Look at the different outlets and find the one that you feel most comfortable with.

Understanding how the media works, what it does, how it does it, empowers you, makes you smarter and gives you a better understanding of the world around you.