Unfortunately, news doesn't come with labels of "FAIR" or "BIASED." But you can develop your own "fairness meter" by using three key factors to measure how straight or slanted a story is.

NEWS

FAIRNESS METER

WORD CHOICE

NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

LEADING LANGUAGE

Does the story simply present the facts or lead you to make judgments about them?

EXAMPLE OF LEADING LANGUAGE:
The superintendent's pet project failed spectacularly less than three months after she shoved it through the approval process.

LOOK FOR:
• Loaded adjectives or verbs
• Patterns of very positive or negative descriptions

CONTEXT

LOTS OF CONTEXT

NO CONTEXT

Does the story provide the big picture or just a slice of what's going on?

EXAMPLE OF ADDED CONTEXT:
Prior to accepting the role as city transportation manager, Smith recieved a PhD in urban planning and ran a private limo company.

LOOK FOR:
• Historical comparisons
• Explanations about sources
• Related facts or data

COUNTER-POINTS

LOTS OF COUNTERPOINTS

NO COUNTERPOINTS

Does the story help you understand multiple perspectives, or only one?

EXAMPLE OF A COUNTERPOINT:
While supporters say the new tax bill will increase education funding, critics point out that middle-class families will bear most of the burden.

LOOK FOR:
• Counterarguments to key claims or conclusions
• Responses to accusations

VERY BIASED   MOSTLY BIASED   MIXED BAG   MOSTLY FAIR   VERY FAIR

NEWSEUM ED

Find a video tour of this tipset at NewseumED.org/fact-finder