

SPOTTING BULLSHIT RESEARCH

A really useful checklist

Check	Key Things to Know	Questions to Ask
Face Value	What do the results say?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the results make sense? • How easy are the results to understand?
Context	What do other studies have to say about this issue?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this study fit with others? • What else does this study have to say? (Have some key results simply been cherry-picked?) • Who else can you talk to about this
Motivation	Who did the research and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who funded the research? • Who conducted the research? • Is there a vested interest? • Are the researchers reporting their findings or attempting to influence an audience?
Quality	How do the researchers know the things they claim?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many people did they ask? • How did they select these people? • How did they ask them? • What did they ask them? • When did they ask them? • What analytical techniques were used? • How did they interpret the results? • Have the data been weighted? • Are the researchers clear about the limitations of the research?
Philosophical	Has the research addressed common sources of bias?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you mistaken a mystery for a puzzle? • Has the research addressed common sources of bias? • How have the researchers avoided common biases such as selection bias; confirmation bias; publication bias; the implicit referent; and the ecological fallacy?

Always be wary if you cannot get access to the original research questionnaire, data coding schedule, and the raw data; and be wary of research that concludes with the call for more research.