

# Twitter Journalism and tweet verification

[Twitter Journalism](#) is a collection of tips and howtos from [Craig Kanalley](#), traffic and trends editor at [Huffington Post](#) and creator of [Breaking Tweets](#).

For a taste, check out this primer on [how to verify a tweet](#). Here's Craig:

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[Breaking Tweets](#) prides itself on giving many different types of Twitterers credit for breaking news, whether it be someone in Honduras with a dozen followers recording the first "earthquake" tweet or a news organization providing the first details of a major story.

But how do you know a tweet's legitimate?

Here's some methods I use at [Breaking Tweets](#) that you can try too:

- 1. Timestamp:** Anytime something breaks with hundreds of tweets in minutes, like a natural disaster, it's good to type various keywords and keep paging back until you find the first few tweets about the news. Unless these Tweeters are psychic, they're probably among the first to have knowledge something's up and they may have additional context depending on the story.
- 2. Contextual tweets:** Immediately check the Twitter user's page for related tweets around the tweet you found. You'd be surprised how often someone posts a follow-up tweet later or precedes the 'breaking tweet' with other pertinent info. This could provide additional context for the story, but it can also help verify a person, especially if they're posting pictures or other content from the scene.
- 3. Authority:** Check the Twitter user's bio. Is this a journalist? Is it a random person off the street? Is it a prankster? How about a comedian? Check their web site or blog if they have one listed. See what you can learn about them [here](#). It's important to have some idea who the tweeter is as you assess the validity of any tweet.
- 4. How many past tweets:** Be leery of new Twitter users. If it's one of their first tweets, it could be anybody starting an account and claiming to have info on a breaking story. The newer the account is, the more skeptical you have to be.
- 5. What are the past tweets:** Check for context by examining the person's Twitter stream. Go back several pages and see what they normally tweet about. Do they

interact with people? Check the accounts they interact with for additional background on piecing together who this person might be. If they say they're in Paris, are they talking about Paris a month ago? Are they tweeting in French? If not, why not? Evaluate the person and get a feel from them as best you can based on past tweets.

**6. Google them:** Google their Twitter name because sometimes people use a Twitter handle as their user name on other sites. See if you can find a LinkedIn page, a Facebook page and other sites that add to who these people might be. If they don't list a full name on their Twitter page, and their user name doesn't turn up much, you have reason to be more skeptical. The more information the person hides, the harder it is to know who they are. Likewise, the more open they are with info, the more likely they're legitimate.

**7. Check for related tweets:** If someone says they heard an explosion in Lahore, what are other people in Lahore tweeting about? Check that and see if anyone else is reporting this. Chances are if a series of diverse people are tweeting about it at the same exact time—and they don't appear related from looking at their accounts—something's up.

**8. Talk to them directly:** Send an @-reply. Start following them and try to send a direct message. Get a conversation going. Ask for more information and build a relationship as best you can. This will help you create a profile of this person and piece together their connection to the story.

These are ways that Breaking Tweets works to verify a tweet. It's all about context, really—the person's past tweets, other tweets that support their tweet, seeking more information about them specifically, and seeking more information about the topic. And of course the timing of the tweet is critical too. If you stay on top of the tweets and follow these sorts of steps to verify tweets, you'll be well on your way to finding great story tips and breaking news well before traditional methods.

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See lots more at [Twitter Journalism](#). Thanks, [Craig!](#)