How to Validate Information

After locating a piece of information online, use the steps below to identify its reliability.

Key Terms:
- Partisan: devoted to a cause or party (usually political)
- Peer-reviewed: work that is professionally evaluated by colleagues of the writer (who are typically specialists in the relevant fields)
- Think-tank: an institution devoted to research
- Biased: favoring one person or side over another

Look at the language in the headline/title

- inflammatory, attention-grabbing, extreme
- "study says," generally questionable
- factual, straight to the point, impartial, strictly informational

Evaluate the source

- Check the "About" page/user profile
- Who is contributing to it?
- Search the source on the internet; make sure this matches what they say about themselves

- social media, anyone can edit
- partisan or biased, controversial
- peer-reviewed, think-tanks, impartial, research journals

Find the origin of the information

- Investigate given sources
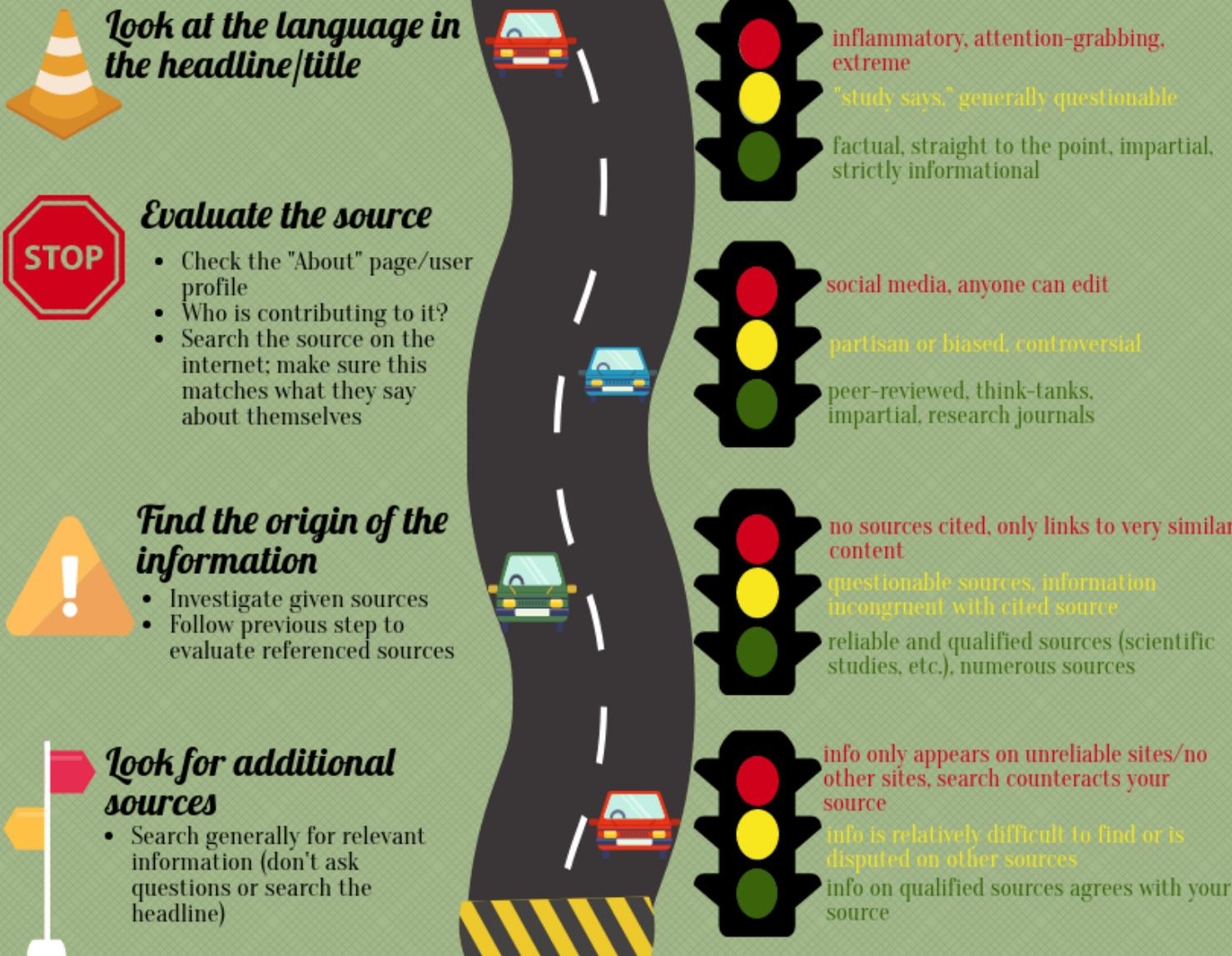- Follow previous step to evaluate referenced sources

- no sources cited, only links to very similar content
- questionable sources, information incongruent with cited source
- reliable and qualified sources (scientific studies, etc.), numerous sources

Look for additional sources

- Search generally for relevant information (don't ask questions or search the headline)

- info only appears on unreliable sites/no other sites, search counteracts your source
- info is relatively difficult to find or is disputed on other sources
- info on qualified sources agrees with your source

Is your source reliable?

?

mostly red: unreliable, must be validated
mostly yellow: questionable, proceed with caution
mostly green: reliable and trustworthy

You have reached your information destination!