Case 20: Can the crew post this image as true?

A realistic image says the campus courtyard flooded today, and Jordy must decide what the six o'clock recap can say about it.

On your own Read What happened and underline the caption's claim. About 5 minutes.

Lupa holds a cropped photo of a courtyard next to the full photo pinned on a board. The full photo also shows a blue doorway.

Your role: You're the one who writes the verification note Jordy posts at six. **New skill:** Confirm an image with independent sources.

What happened

It is Wednesday, 3:10 p.m. For twenty minutes, an image has been going around the group chat. It looks like a photo of the campus courtyard, with water over the paving and benches. The caption says, "Courtyard flooded today, stay away." It showed up at 2:48 p.m. with no link, no date and no name.

Jordy is putting together the crew's recap, which goes out at six. Sami has zoomed in on a hand in the picture, and the fingers seem to merge at the knuckles. Someone ran the image through a free online detector. It reported "12% likely AI-generated."

A reply in the chat says the writer's roommate's friend saw water near the library. Jordy checks the campus facilities alerts page. It shows no active alerts, but its last update was Monday morning.

Your question: Did the courtyard flood today, and what should the recap say about the image?

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example, then write your first guess in the box. About 6 minutes.

Provenance Provenance is information about where an image or a document came from and how it has been handled.

En español: procedencia

In this case: The courtyard image arrived at 2:48 p.m. with no link, no date and no named poster. Its provenance is unknown.

Corroboration Corroboration is support for a claim from an independent source.

En español: corroboración

In this case: A campus alert or someone's dated photo of the courtyard could corroborate the flood. A roommate's friend's report of water near the library cannot.

Verification note A verification note is a short record of what you checked, what you found and what is still unknown.

En español: nota de verificación

In this case: Instead of posting the image, the recap says what the crew checked, what it found and what is still unknown.

Who is involved

Sami

Checking where the image came from

"Everyone's zooming in on the hand. I did too, and it's weird. But I still don't know who posted this."

Jordy

Putting the six o'clock recap together

"The recap goes out at six. Right now I have an image with no source, a strange hand and an alerts page that hasn't updated since Monday."

Your first guess

Before you look at the evidence, do you think the courtyard flooded today?

I think the courtyard ___ because ___.

Notes

Reading passage

The flood nobody can confirm

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Provenance**: Provenance is information about where an image or a document came from and how it has been handled.
- **Corroboration**: Corroboration is support for a claim from an independent source.
- **Verification note**: A verification note is a short record of what you checked, what you found and what is still unknown.
- **Claim**: A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Holding statement**: A holding statement is a short update that says what is known, what is still being checked and when people will hear more.
- **Correction**: A correction is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information.

The story: An image with no source

It is Wednesday at 3:10 p.m. For twenty minutes, an image has been going around the group chat. It looks like a photo of the campus courtyard, with water over the paving and the benches. The caption says, “Courtyard flooded today, stay away.” It showed up at 2:48 p.m. with no link, no date and no name.

Jordy is putting together the crew’s recap, which goes out at six. Sami zooms in on a hand in the picture. The fingers seem to merge at the knuckles. Someone runs the image through a free online detector. It says “12% likely AI-generated.” Someone else says their roommate’s friend saw water near the library.

Jordy checks the campus facilities alerts page. It shows no active alerts, but its last update was Monday morning.

This is the last case in the casebook, and it uses almost every skill you have learned. Your role is to write the verification note Jordy posts at six.

Stop and think. Why does Sami care more about who posted the image first than about the hand?

Where did it come from?

In Case 1, a real clip in a group chat seemed to cancel a screening. You learned to find the original source. That is the first move here too. **Provenance** is information about where an image or a document came from and how it has been handled. This image has no link, no date and no named poster, so its provenance is unknown.

The caption makes a **claim**, a statement that something is true that you can check with evidence. The hand is a clue, not proof. The detector score is a clue, not proof. As Sami asks, "Twelve percent of what?" And a roommate's friend is not a source. Near the library is not the courtyard, either.

Corroboration is support for a claim from an independent source. A campus alert would count. So would someone's dated photo of the courtyard. In Case 9, you learned to check an official source. The alerts page is official, but it has not been updated since Monday, so it cannot prove there was no flood.

Should Jordy post the image with a question mark? No. "A question mark still spreads the picture," Jordy says. Instead, Jordy writes a **verification note**, a short record of what you checked, what you found and what is still unknown. It works like the **holding statement** from Case 1: it says what is known, what is being checked and when people will hear more. If better evidence appears, the crew will post an update. In Case 3, you learned that a **correction** is a public statement that replaces wrong information with accurate information. If the note turns out to be wrong, the crew will post one where people saw it.

Stop and think. Why is the alerts page not enough to prove there was no flood?

Real fake images

After Hurricane Helene in October 2024, an image of a crying girl holding a puppy in a rescue boat spread fast. Fact-checkers found no original photographer or news source. A digital-forensics expert pointed to details that did not hold together (UC Berkeley School of Information, October 4, 2024).

Stop and think. Why is a verification note better than posting the image with a question mark?

Sources

Real source | **UC Berkeley School of Information** | **October 4, 2024**

Hany Farid breaks down the viral Helene image

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document and write what it shows and what it leaves out. About 10 minutes.

Evidence A | Group-chat post

The courtyard image and its caption

Image, described: a photo-like view of the campus courtyard with water over the paving and benches. A person in the foreground holds up a phone. Caption: “Courtyard flooded today, stay away.” Shared Wednesday at 2:48 p.m. with no link, no date on the image and no original poster named.

Look closely: Underline what the caption claims. Circle what the post is missing.

What it shows

One question I still have

Evidence D | Web page

The campus facilities alerts page, checked at 3:10 p.m.

“No active alerts. Last update: Monday, 9:15 a.m. Scheduled elevator maintenance in Science Hall, completed.”

Look closely: When was this page last updated? Compare that with the caption’s claim.

What it shows

One question I still have

Look at the evidence, continued

What is still missing from the evidence?

Notes

Key idea: provenance

On your own Read the key idea and the code of ethics, then answer the question in the box. About 6 minutes.

Provenance is information about where an image or a document came from and how it has been handled. Check it first when an image claims to show a news event. An image can look polished and still be generated, edited, old or shared with the wrong caption. The courtyard image arrived with no link, no date and no named poster, so its provenance is unknown.

A detail or a tool can give a clue, but it cannot settle the question. An odd-looking hand is a reason to look closer. A natural-looking hand does not prove that an image is real, either. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) describes several ways to track, label, watermark and detect synthetic content, such as AI-generated images. NIST explains that each approach has technical limits.

For a claim about a real event, look for the earliest post, its date and place, and corroboration. **Corroboration** is support for a claim from an independent source. Here, that could be a campus alert or someone's dated photo of the courtyard. If you cannot confirm the claim, write a verification note. A **verification note** is a short record of what you checked, what you found and what is still unknown.

Professional standards

Real source | **Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA)**

RTDNA Code of Ethics: Truth and accuracy above all

"Journalism verifies, provides relevant context, tells the rest of the story and acknowledges the absence of important additional information."

In plain words: The RTDNA code asks news staff to say what they checked and to admit what they still do not know.

Question: The facilities page shows no active alerts but was last updated Monday. What should Jordy's note say is still unknown?

Your answer

The note should say we don't know ___.

In the news

Real source | NPR | May 22, 2023

Fake viral images of an explosion at the Pentagon were probably created by AI

A realistic fake image spread fast and briefly moved markets before officials confirmed nothing happened.

Real source | CNN | May 22, 2023

'Verified' Twitter accounts share fake image of 'explosion' near Pentagon, causing confusion

A blue check was not proof: accounts that looked trustworthy still shared an image with no real source.

Notes

Sort the evidence

On your own Sort each piece of evidence under the claim it bears on and fill in each box. About 6 minutes.

Two claims are in play: the flood and the image. Sort each piece of evidence under the claim it actually bears on. What would settle either one?

Evidence	**Claim 1** The courtyard flooded today.	**Claim 2** The image was generated by AI.
1 The image shows water in a courtyard, with no date or source		
2 Facilities alerts page at 3:10 p.m.: no active alerts		
3 Secondhand report of water near the library		
4 An odd hand and a 12% detector score		

Still open

- The image's earliest source and date

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is ___. I would ask ___.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose what Jordy should do, explain why and fix the two marked phrases. About 6 minutes.

The recap goes out at six. What should Jordy do about the courtyard image?

- ☐ **A** Post the image with a question: “Is the courtyard flooded?”
- ☐ **B** Say the image is fake, because the hand looks wrong.
- ☐ **C** Leave the image out, report what the crew checked and say the flood is not confirmed.

Why I chose it

Improve a draft

A student’s first draft

Heads up everyone!! ❶ The courtyard flooded today so don’t go over there. Some people are saying the picture is AI because the hand looks weird but I ran it through a detector and it said 12% AI so it’s basically real. My roommate also said her friend saw water near the library earlier, so that pretty much confirms it. Stay safe and ❷ tell your friends, we don’t want anyone getting hurt or ruining their shoes lol. We’ll post more if we hear anything else about it.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

Rewrite phrase 2

Grades 6—8

Your task

On your own Read the steps and fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft.

With a partner, fill an image-check card and write two sentences telling friends whether to trust the courtyard picture.

Use: The image description, caption and campus facilities page only.

You'll make: Completed card plus 2—3 sentences

Time: 45 minutes

1. Read the caption in Evidence A. Write what it says happened, and when.
2. Write who posted the picture first and when. Write "unknown" if you cannot find out.
3. Check the alerts page in Evidence D. Write what it says about a flood.
4. Decide with your partner: is the claim confirmed, false or unverified?
5. Write 2 or 3 sentences in the Your draft box that tell friends whether to trust the picture.
6. Check that your sentences do not blame the person who posted it.

Show it your way

Write it: Write 2—3 sentences with the frame "The picture shows __. It doesn't show __."

Say it: Tell a partner in 30 seconds whether you would share the picture and which proof you would want first.

Show it: Draw the image-check card as a four-box chart and circle the box that is still empty.

Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Your task, continued

The claim

Who posted it first

Date on the image

Other proof

Confirmed, false or unverified?

Your draft

The picture shows ___. It doesn't show ___.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions, mark your level in each rubric row and write one change you made. About 5 minutes.

Do your sentences say what the picture shows and what it doesn't show?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do they name a better source to check?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do they use the word "unverified" correctly?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Do they avoid blaming the person who posted it?	☐ Yes	☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ Treats the image as proof.	☐ Cites a detector or a detail as a verdict.	☐ Checks the earliest source and an independent record.	☐ Checks several sources and names what each can't show.
Reasoning	☐ Declares real or fake with no basis.	☐ Hedges without explaining why.	☐ Matches confidence to evidence.	☐ Separates authenticity of the file from truth of the event.
Audience & purpose	☐ Urges spreading.	☐ Warns without guidance.	☐ Gives followers a safe next step.	☐ Gives a next step, a follow-up time and a way to contribute evidence.

How your work is scored, continued

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Softens words only.	☐ Replaces the verdict with a verification note.	☐ Explains how each change protects followers and credibility.

One change I made

I changed ___ because ___.

Notes

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question, then complete the sentence frames. About 8 minutes.

1 **What would you need beyond the image to support the caption's claim?**

2 **Do you agree with Jordy's choice to leave the image out of the recap, and why?**

3 **The alerts page shows nothing new since Monday. Does that prove the courtyard did not flood?**

My take

I think the crew should ___ because ___.

The evidence that changed my first guess is ___.

My take, continued

One question I still have is ___.

Notes

Talk about this case at home

Case 20: Can the crew post this image as true?

In this case, a realistic image in a group chat claims that a campus courtyard flooded today. Your student checked where the image came from and wrote a short note that says what is known and what is not.

Questions to talk about

1. What would you check before you share a picture of breaking news?
2. Where does your town or school post official alerts?
3. Why can saying you are not sure yet be better than guessing?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.

See the case online.