Bias is defined as prejudice against or in favor of one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. Media bias is when journalists, news producers, and news outlets show bias in the selection of events and stories as well as the ways they are reported. Below find explanations of several of the ways in which bias can show up in the media. When you know what to look for you can see a story for what it is.

Bias by Source

The selection and omission of sources and their stories can direct the opinions of the Consumer. News outlets and their editors choose what stories to include along with placement (see Bias by Headline) to direct consumers in their news consumption. Reporters choose the words in each story (See Bias by Words) but the editors choose which story to use. Do they choose the article for example where a reaction is described as “remarks greeted with outrage and jeers” or do they choose the one who reports the reaction as “mild disagreement followed the remarks”? Bias by Source can also happen when a source chooses only stories on one “side” or perspective of an event, choosing to omit or bury any contrary opinions. Bias by Source can also describe when a news source chooses where the basic information is coming from, choosing an eyewitness, a police officer, elected official, or a spokesperson for a related cause. Each will present a story with their own bias attached. Many times stories are bought and sold offering “bait” to draw people into a story. When looking for this type of bias, read more than one accounting of a story and look for language that shows bias. Also look for who has offered the information and question their association and possible bias.

Bias by Placement

Front Page News, Headline News, Breaking Stories; research shows that consumers often put more importance and credibility on news placed on the “Top”. Front page headlines and top of the hour news stories tend to be where most people look for their news so editors choose what stories to place here, what stories are pushed back or left out altogether (see Bias by Source). This type of bias can often be related to the overall agenda of the source. Some will be more liberal or left where others lean to the right and a conservative view point. When looking for this type of bias, look at several different sources is the same story on a back page, left out altogether, or on the bottom of the hour?

Bias by Headline or Story

Like Bias by Placement, Bias by Headline or Story occurs when the wording (See Bias by Word Choice) of a headline expresses the authors bias. Certain words can show approval or condemnation. They can stir controversy or engender sympathy. News sources whether online, print, or television all want to catch your attention so they use the headline. Once you have been hooked in by the headline, they expect you will follow through to the rest of the story. Therefore they will often choose very sensational headlines to catch your attention. When looking for this type of bias, look at words chosen for the headline. Do they match with the story or just grab your attention? Read several stories in the source and see if there is a pattern of over the top headlines. You can also try to find the story in other sources and compare the headlines.

Bias by Camera Angels, Photos and Captions

A picture is worth a thousand words. The choice of a picture or video chosen to go with a story can influence the consumers’ opinion. There are several ways that images can be used with bias. When looking for photographic bias look for other images that capture the same event. Are there more that show similar things? Question videos and images that do not offer information about the scene and remember in this day and age of digital images seeing is not always believing.

- **Choice of Photo** – the choice of photograph or video that accompanies a story is an editorial choice and that choice can lead to bias. The choice of picture can flatter a person or make them look unpleasant or silly. Images can lead consumers to assume things about the subject. Do you show the shooting victim in a cap and gown or as a “thug”? Do you show the slain body or the army soldier?

- **Captions** – Captions that correspond to a picture are another way to bias by picture. Incorrect or misleading captions (See bias by words) can influence the consumers’ opinions of a story.

- **Photoshop & Editing** – Pictures can be “doctored” to show something that didn’t happen and video can be edited together to show events not as originally shot. Both are ways that mislead the viewer into believing something happened as shown.

- **Staged** – Creating or staging a picture to “show” an event or an event that never happened can mislead consumers into the belief that the event happened as shown, inserting the photographer’s bias into the image.

- **Omission of Photo** – Often a story is written with a photograph so the choice of wording is less precise relying on the viewing of the photograph to fill in the details. If the phot is not attached incorrect assumptions can be made.

Bias by Labeling

The use of Particular names and titles can bias people when reading stories. Perspective is often the only difference between a “freedom fighter” and a “terrorist”. Using terms that evoke emotions such as ex-con, terrorist, activist, or radical can lead a consumer into assumptions. Bias by labeling can also be found when political ideology is not evenly used. When pairing terms such as Ultra-Conservative and Right-Wing is paired with liberal OR Far-Left, Ultra-Liberal paired with Conservative an illusion of preference is given within the news. Be aware of terms such as expert, watch dog, official. These labels can often put extra weight to what this person says offering an air of authority. Check the credentials of the person to make sure they are part of the story.