

# News Feed today: A guide for news publishers

How organic news content on Facebook works for people and news publishers



## First, the basics

When you open Facebook and scroll through posts with links, photos and videos, that's News Feed. In News Feed, we take all available posts from friends, family, groups and Pages you follow, and then we make an educated guess about how to order these posts in your News Feed so we're showing you the posts that are most relevant and interesting to you closer to the top of your Feed.

There are a few ways that people see posts from news organizations in your News Feed. News can be posted by your friends or family, who are sharing or posting links or videos from news publishers. News can also be shared directly by news organizations

who have Facebook Pages where they share their reporting. When you follow a news organization's Facebook Page, you'll often see stories or videos from that outlet in your News Feed. There are places on Facebook beyond News Feed where you can discover news content as well, including Facebook News, Watch, Groups and Stories.

All these places are meant to connect you with the most relevant and meaningful content for you.

The following document outlines how we prioritize the news content that people see in News Feed.

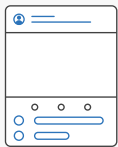
# How News Feed works

## AVAILABLE INVENTORY



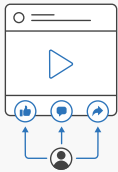
In order to connect you with the most relevant and meaningful content in your News Feed, we first look at all new posts from friends, family and Pages you follow. We call that **available inventory**. Each person largely determines their own inventory by choosing which profiles, Pages and groups they follow.

## SIGNALS



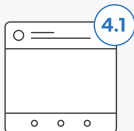
Then we try to understand the **signals** on each piece of content within your inventory. Signals like: Who posted this story? When did they post it? Who commented on it? We'll explain these signals in more detail in the next section.

## PREDICTIONS



Based on those signals, we make **predictions** for each person on Facebook, to determine how much each piece of content will matter to them.

## RELEVANCE SCORE



All of these predictions add up to a single **relevance score**, which is our best guess for how interested we think each person will be in that piece of content. Content with the highest score will show up higher in your News Feed. What ranks higher for you may rank lower for others because each person has different preferences that determine their inventory, signals and predictions.

We are constantly making changes to News Feed signals and how we make predictions to deliver the most meaningful and relevant experience for people. We have a [set of values](#) that guides our thinking every time we make these changes.

## What is and isn't permitted

We recognize how important it is for Facebook to be a place where people feel empowered to communicate, and we take seriously our role in keeping abuse off our service. That's why we've developed a set of Community Standards that outlines what is and is not allowed on Facebook. Our policies are [based on feedback from our community and the advice of experts](#) in fields such as technology, public safety and human rights.

To ensure that everyone's voice is valued, we take great care to craft policies that are inclusive of different views and beliefs, in particular those of people and communities that might otherwise be overlooked or marginalized. In some cases, we allow content which would otherwise go against our Community Standards — if it is newsworthy and in the public interest. We do this only after weighing the public interest value against the risk of harm, and we look to international human rights standards to make these judgments.

Content that violates these standards, either from profiles or Pages, is removed. [You can learn more here about our specific Community Standards.](#)



## What signals we use in News Feed

News Feed has tens of thousands of signals to predict and rank all available posts for each user.

What follows is not an exhaustive list, but these are some of the most important signals that are relevant for news content and news publishers.

### Signals that connect people with meaningful content

Facebook was built to bring people closer together and build relationships. One of the ways we do this is by connecting people with meaningful posts from their friends and family in News Feed. In 2018, we announced that News Feed would prioritize posts that spark conversations and meaningful interactions between people. This means News Feed prioritizes posts from friends and family. Page posts that generate conversations between people are shown higher in News Feed. [Learn more.](#)

In recent years, we've also introduced additional signals to show people content that is worth their

time and that they will likely find meaningful.

These new signals are developed using survey data to predict what an individual may care about most. [Learn more.](#)

In addition to using signals about what people like, comment and share, we use other signals based on content consumption to make predictions about what people may want to see more or less of in News Feed. So for example, if you watch a video through to completion, instead of just reading its title or watching the first few seconds, that may be a signal that you find that video content engaging.



### Signals for videos

For video posts, whether they are news or not, we also have specific signals that help people discover great videos and build relationships with the creators and publishers that matter to them. Intent and repeat viewership are important factors we consider when surfacing videos to people in News Feed. We add more weight in ranking to videos that people seek out and return to week after week. [Learn more here.](#)

## Signals to reduce problematic content

In addition to removing content that violates our policies, we take steps to reduce the spread of problematic content. These signals and demotions are often informed by what people tell us about the kind of content they don't like to see.

Some important demotions for news content include:

### **Reducing false news** [Learn more](#)

We identify potential misinformation using a variety of signals, and our fact-checking partners can also proactively identify false news on their own. Fact-checkers review and rate the accuracy of stories through original reporting, including interviewing primary sources, consulting public data and conducting analyses of media, including photos and video. Once we have a rating from a fact-checking partner, we take action and ensure that fewer people see that misinformation, by surfacing fact-checked articles to users across our platforms and showing labels on top of false stories.

### **Click-gap** [Learn more](#)

This signal looks for domains with a disproportionate number of outbound Facebook clicks compared to other parts of the web. If a publisher is getting a lot more traction on Facebook versus elsewhere, this can be a sign that the Page is producing low-quality content.

### **Clickbait** [Learn more](#)

“Click-baiting” is when a publisher posts a link with a headline that encourages people to click to see more, without telling them much information about what they will see. Clickbait intentionally omits crucial information or exaggerates the details of a story to make it seem like a bigger deal than it really is. This gets attention and lures visitors into clicking on a link, but they then quickly return to News Feed.

### **Engagement bait** [Learn more](#)

Engagement bait is a tactic to create Facebook posts that goad people into interacting, through likes, shares, comments and other actions, in order to artificially boost engagement and get greater reach on News Feed. Posts and Pages that use this tactic will be demoted.

### **Sensationalized health content** [Learn more](#)

We consider designating health content as sensationalized if a post about health exaggerates or misleads — for example, making a sensational claim about a miracle cure. We also consider if a post promotes a product or service based on a health-related claim — for example, promoting a medication or pill claiming to help people lose weight.



## **Low-quality web experiences** [Learn more](#)

We hear from our community that people are disappointed when they click on a link that leads to a web page containing little substantive content and covered in disruptive, shocking or malicious ads. People expect their experience after clicking on a post to be straightforward. If we determine that a post might link to these types of low-quality web pages, the post may show up lower in people's News Feed. This way we can help ensure people see fewer misleading posts and more informative posts. This helps to reduce the economic incentives of financially motivated spammers.

## **Deceptive actions** [Learn more](#)

Deceiving readers into clicking or reacting to content in any way erodes trust and leads to a poor experience. For that reason, Pages that are found to engage in any sort of deception with their content may appear lower in News Feed. "Cloaking" is when a publisher may suggest the content will go to one place, but when clicked, the post redirects to somewhere unrelated. To combat this, non-publisher Pages will no longer be able to overwrite link metadata (i.e., headline, description, image) in the Graph API or in Page composer. This will help us eliminate a channel that has been abused to post false news.

## **Limited originality content** [Learn more](#)

Content posted to Facebook should offer unique value to its audiences. Therefore, content with limited originality will face reduced distribution on our platform and the Page that posted it may have its access to monetization tools limited or removed. This type of content is against our Page Terms as well as our Content Monetization Policies.



## Signals for news content

In 2018 we started [introducing signals](#) that specifically apply to news content and news publishers. These signals are largely developed based on what people tell us they find valuable in news content. Throughout our research we regularly hear that people want to see news content that they find informative, authoritative and trusted. We also work with publishers and external experts when we develop these specific signals.

### News content and news publishers are identified through two primary methods.

- First, the [news Page index](#) is a defensible, transparent and consistent way to identify news Pages and distinguish them from all other Pages on Facebook. We use a combination of computer signals and human reviewers to vet every application against our news guidelines. Pages that meet these guidelines [may be eligible for products and services](#) specifically designed for news publishers.
- We use technology, called machine-learning, to predict whether a piece of content on Facebook is news. We look for signals like whether the content is about current events, timely information, and if sources are cited.

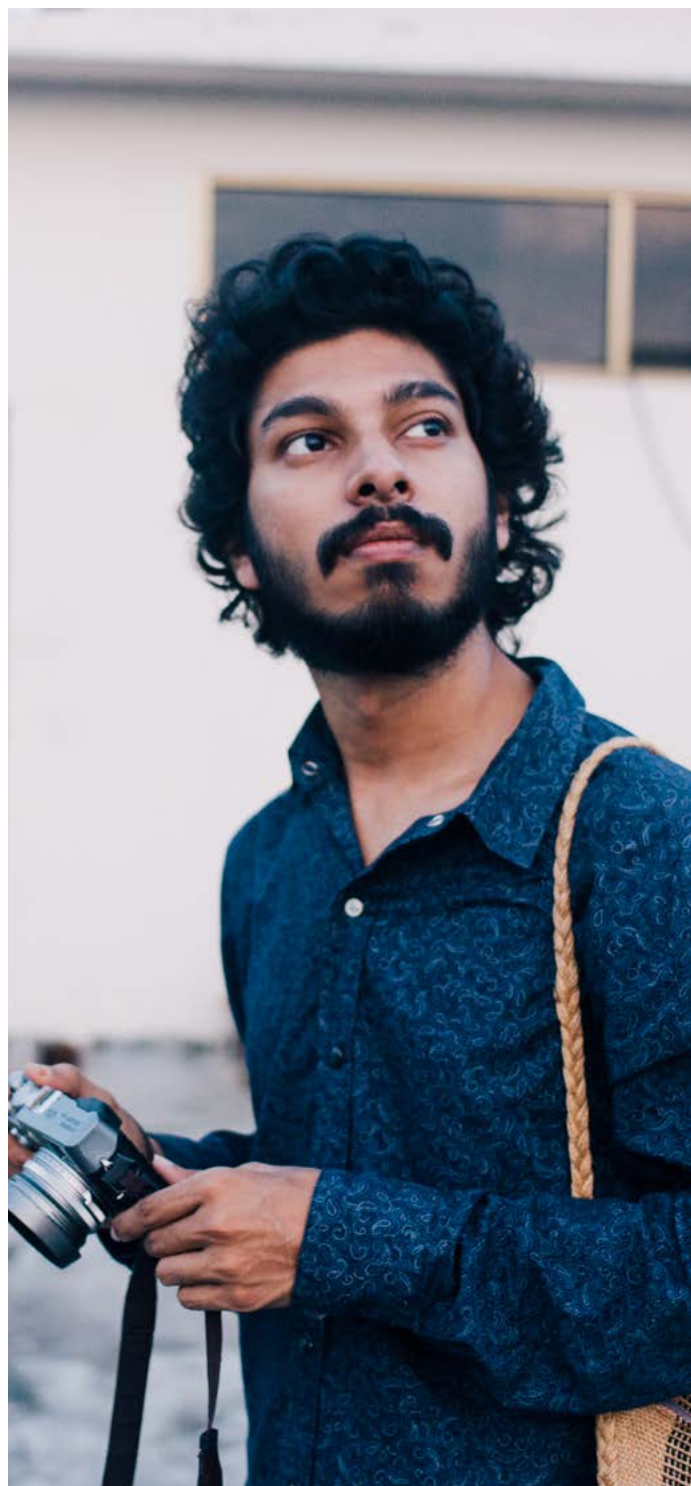
For content that is identified as news using machine learning, we apply the following signals, in addition to the signals already listed above.

### Reducing news content that doesn't have transparent authorship

We demote content from publishers that do not have transparent information about their reporters or editorial staff. We review content and publishers for the presence of:

- Bylines, including first and last name or sufficient additional information about reporters
- A masthead or an "about us" page that lists editorial staff

We recognize that in certain markets, transparency can put journalists at risk, so this signal only applies in countries where there is press freedom.



## Prioritizing original reporting and analysis

We prioritize news content that we identify as original on a developing story or topic. We do this by looking at groups of articles on a particular topic and identifying the ones most often cited as the original source or being first to report on the topic. We give those widely cited articles a boost in News Feed.

Original reporting plays an important role in informing people around the world. Breaking a news story or in-depth investigative report, uncovering new facts and data, providing critical updates in times of crisis or eyewitness reports, interviews, and media shot on-the-ground all represent different types of original news. We know publishing this important journalism takes time and expertise, and we want to ensure it has a prioritized place on Facebook to incentivize its continued creation. Defining original reporting and the standards for it are complex, so we continue to work with publishers and academics to refine and improve this approach over time.

## Prioritizing informative news

We've prioritized informative sources in News Feed since 2016. We will continue to improve on the work we first announced in August 2016, where we began asking people to rank the informativeness of updates in their feed on a scale of one to five.

## Prioritizing local news

We prioritize local news so that you can see topics that have a direct impact on you and your community and discover what's happening in your local area. We identify local publishers as those whose links are clicked on by readers in a tight geographic area. If a story is from a publisher in your area, and you either follow the publisher's Page or your friend shares a story from that outlet, it might show up higher in News Feed. [Learn more.](#)

[We will continue to develop new ranking signals for news content over time in partnership with academics, industry experts and news publishers. We'll update this document as new signals are introduced.](#)



## How news publishers use Facebook

Facebook provides tools that publishers can use – many free of charge – to distribute their content, grow their audience and make money. Someone who follows more publishers and engages regularly with news content will likely see more of it in their News Feed.

Outside of Facebook News ([facebook.com/news](https://facebook.com/news)), there are two primary ways news can appear on Facebook, when it's shared by a person or when it's shared by the publisher. Referral traffic is one way that publishers use Facebook to help their business. They post links to their articles through their page on Facebook, so that people will click on the link and drive traffic to a publisher's own site. However, the value of referral traffic to a publisher is affected by that publisher's particular business model. Different publishers have different business models. Some offer their content for free and monetize by primarily showing ads to readers. Others make their content available only to subscribers and rely primarily on subscription revenue.

Even though news content represents a small slice of content in an average Facebook user's News Feed, we want people to have the best news experience possible. The purpose of News Feed is to show each person the content that matters most to them. It is not to guarantee referral traffic to news publishers. Traffic from Facebook to a news site is, by its nature, changeable. Referrals will depend on how interesting and relevant a person finds a particular story.

### Three key points about news in News Feed:

1

#### **Publishers control whether their news is accessed on Facebook**

Publishers choose what content to make available on Facebook – if any at all. Content is sometimes removed if, for example, it violates our community standards.

2

#### **Facebook does not charge publishers for referral traffic or use any of our tools to distribute their news and grow their audience**

3

#### **Facebook gives publishers cost-free opportunities to monetize their content**

Below is a list of tools available to publishers and how revenue works for each.

# How news publishers make money on Facebook

## Referral traffic

**What is it?** Publishers will share links on Facebook to help drive traffic back to their sites. The more people who share that content, the higher the likelihood of driving traffic. While social media has become a material part of traffic-driving from publishers, in aggregate, just over 10% of total publisher traffic comes from social media [Parse.ly, “Predicting sources of traffic to content in 2019,” Feb 2019].

**How does it benefit publishers?** Publishers own and control 100% of all transactions and advertisements on their own site.

## Instant Articles

**What is it?** A tool that allows articles to open faster and includes a publisher-specific, recirculation unit, allowing people to view more articles from the same publisher within the same reading session.

**How does it benefit publishers?** Because of the user experience, we’ve seen a significant distribution increase when publishers use Instant Articles vs mWeb, i.e. the same article on mobile web browsers. This increase in distribution can result in a comparative increase in monetization; publishers can sell ads themselves keeping 100% of the revenue, or serve Facebook ads with a rev share that is consistent with industry standards. Instant Articles are also a conversion tool, serving units to encourage users to subscribe to a publisher newsletter, download an app, or like a publisher’s Facebook page.

## Subscriptions

**What is it?** Facebook’s marketing tools are a great way to drive subscriptions for publishers. People can organically convert to subscribers by hitting a paywall, like paywalls in Instant Articles, and then paying. Organically growing an audience can help create leads that can be converted through other channels too, like email or marketing. Within Instant Articles, you can create a paywall that limits how many articles a user sees before they have to buy a subscription.

**How does it benefit publishers?** Publishers control 100% of the money they earn through subscriptions. It creates a direct-paying relationship with the customer.

## Facebook video & in-stream ads

**What is it?** If you publish a video directly to Facebook (rather than share a link to a video-sharing platform or a link back to your own site), you may be eligible to include ads.

**How does it benefit publishers?** Publishers can build an audience through engaging video and keep a majority of revenue earned from any ads placed within the video.

## Branded content

**What is it?** Publishers can create paid partnerships with brands, who will sponsor content produced by a news publisher, for example, “50 Greatest Athletes of the Last 50 Years” sponsored by a major sneaker company.

**How does it benefit publishers?** Publishers can directly sell their ability to produce great stories and reach their followers through branded content. These monetary transactions are completed outside of Facebook and publishers keep 100% of the revenue.

## Facebook Ads

**What is it?** Businesses and people around the world use Facebook Ads to reach customers, market their products and drive sales. For news publishers, ads can help sell subscription offers, merchandise, tickets to events, and any other products for sale.

**How does it benefit publishers?** While publishers – or any business – pay Facebook to place an ad, any revenue earned from a sale toward a publisher’s product or service goes directly to the publisher. Partners with significant branded content businesses or ad sales on their own sites could use Facebook Ads for traffic arbitrage, and drive revenue on their owned sites by directing more traffic than organic posts alone.

## Facebook Audience Network

**What is it?** Some apps have their own ad network, but not all do. By participating in Facebook Audience Network, publishers and app developers can monetize and create engaging ad experiences on their own apps, through a combination of access to Facebook advertisers and people-based marketing.

**How does it benefit app publishers?** They retain the majority of the revenue for advertisements placed on their apps through Facebook Audience Network.



## Correcting the record: News Feed and news publishers

❌ **MYTH #1:** Facebook takes publisher content.

✅ **FACT: Facebook does not take publisher content.**

Publisher content appears on Facebook for one of two reasons: Publishers post it to their Facebook Page or people share a link to it. Publishers post content in order to build an audience, engage a community, monetize it directly on Facebook, or drive traffic back to their owned and operated sites. People share to connect with their friends and family.

❌ **MYTH #2:** Most publisher traffic comes from social media.

✅ **FACT: Traffic to publishers comes from a variety of sources and the relative importance of those sources varies from publisher to publisher.**

Important sources of traffic include people going directly to a publisher's site or app, people finding publisher content via search, people sharing content via private messaging or text, and also people discovering publisher content on social networks. While social media has become a valuable part of traffic driving for some publishers, in aggregate, just over 10% of total publisher traffic comes from social media, according to Parse.ly, a third-party data and analytics firm that many publishers use [Parse.ly, "Predicting sources of traffic to content in 2019," Feb 2019].

❌ **MYTH #3:** Publishers share their revenue with Facebook.

✅ **FACT: Publishers keep all of the revenue they generate from referral traffic driven to their sites from Facebook.**

When publishers or people share links to publisher content like articles on Facebook, and people click on those articles, they are redirected to publisher sites where publishers can show ads or sell subscriptions. Facebook does not earn revenue off of that traffic and does not charge for distributing publisher content.

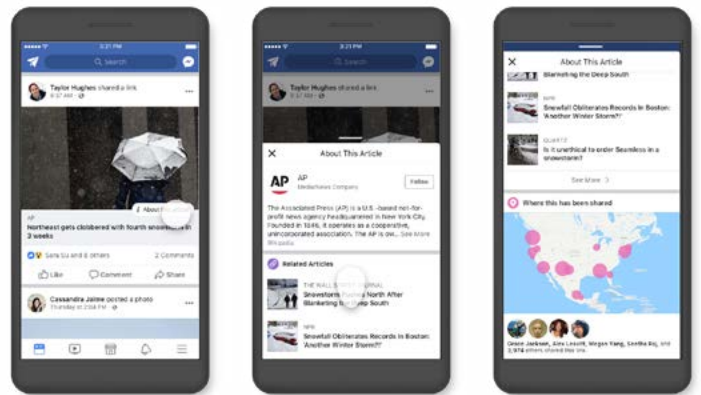
Facebook offers many opportunities for publishers to earn revenue on Facebook too. For example, publishers can choose to post video directly to Facebook and have those videos monetized through ads. Likewise, publishers also have the option to use our Audience Network tool - as do all advertisers - to monetize off Facebook. Publishers can also choose to use Instant Articles to generate revenue through ad sales. Instant Articles is a product in which a publisher can have its articles appear in a standardized format on the Facebook platform. Instant Articles load faster so engagement is higher. If a publisher sells an ad in Instant Articles, they keep 100% of the revenue. If a publisher opts to have Facebook sell those ads, there's a revenue share or split. As with video ads, using Instant Articles is optional, publishers actively opt in, and the terms are clear and agreed upon in advance.

❌ **MYTH #4:** Facebook isn't interested in building products that help publishers.

✅ **FACT: Facebook has built a suite of products that help publishers develop audience and solve business needs like monetization.**

Facebook Instant Articles allow publishers the ability to use a fast-loading native article format. Instant Articles also include ad products that allow publishers to directly monetize on Facebook. We regularly engage and consult with publishers when we're building new products to get their feedback and understand their needs.

Facebook's Subscription product – a native paywall via Instant Articles – allows publishers to pursue subscription business models on Facebook by encouraging direct payment from consumers. Other products Facebook has built to support publishers include video tools for producing dynamic video and monetizing it, branded content products to support publisher monetization, analytic insights to help publishers understand what's working, and a breaking news indicator for encouraging audience engagement and development.



❌ **MYTH #5:** Facebook doesn't respect paywalls.

✅ **FACT: Facebook supports publisher paywalls and subscription business models.**

If a publisher shares a link on Facebook to an article that sits behind a paywall, a person who clicks that link will hit the paywall. Publishers determine how their paywall operates on Facebook. For example, if they want people to get three free articles before hitting the paywall, then that's what will happen when they post links to Facebook. If they want people to hit a paywall immediately, then they will.

❌ **MYTH #6:** Instant Articles are given preference in News Feed ranking.

✅ **FACT: Instant Articles aren't given more weight in News Feed ranking.**

Moreover, Instant Articles are not given more weight by default over articles shared by publishers via a link within News Feed. News Feed uses a variety of signals to determine how it ranks or surfaces content. Signals such as engagement, bounce rate, clicks and time spent on an article can influence a piece of content's ranking. Instant Articles, due to their faster loading time, may have better metrics than other linked content but Instant Articles are not de facto ranked higher than other links.



❌ **MYTH #7:** Facebook only cares about large publishers.

✅ **FACT: Facebook has a dedicated team for working with and supporting local news publishers.**

Our monetization and audience development products can be utilized by publishers both large and small, and it has also undertaken specific program and product initiatives to benefit smaller publishers, including local ones.

For instance, Facebook has invested heavily in programs intended to help publishers both large and small. Here are two recent examples:

- In early 2019, Facebook announced a \$300M investment in news programs, partnerships and content over three years. The investment will help fund a variety of efforts including reporting grants for local publishers.
- The Local News Accelerator Program helps local news publishers build sustainable business models through intensive training, expert coaching and grants. Publishers have generated tens of thousands of new, paying subscribers and members while in the nine-month program, and this is only the first of a multiyear investment.

❌ **MYTH #8:** Facebook does not share data with publishers.

✅ **FACT: Facebook does allow publishers to access analytical insights, but we do not give individual data to publishers. We are committed to keeping people's information safe and ensuring people have more control over their data.**

Publishers can view audience, traffic and engagement data via insights products like Page Insights, Instant Articles Insights, Facebook Analytics and Creator Studio.

The data is aggregated and anonymous but allows publishers to learn which of their content is performing well and which isn't. Facebook also has a separate platform for data insights called CrowdTangle. For publishers, CrowdTangle provides data insights from public social accounts to learn, for example, how their articles are performing through social media shares in addition to what's trending across popular social media platforms including Facebook.

# Connecting people to the content that matter most to them

Our goal with News Feed is to show people the content that matters most to them, every time they visit Facebook. Your News Feed is a personalized, ever-changing collection of photos, videos, links and updates from the friends, family and businesses – including news sources – you’ve connected to on Facebook as well as recommendations of content you may like.



To learn more about News Feed including more about how News Feed works and best practices for publishing, visit [Facebook for Media](#).



To review our policies on content and monetization, visit [Facebook Business Help Center](#).



To view updates and announcements about News Feed, visit the [Facebook Newsroom](#).



For more on how Facebook works in support of the news industry with tools, programs and partnerships, visit [facebook.com/journalismproject](https://facebook.com/journalismproject).



## Supporting a sustainable news ecosystem

We share the goal of supporting a sustainable news ecosystem. Even though news content represents a small slice of content in an average Facebook user’s News Feed, we want people to have the best news experience possible. Our users value high-quality journalism. So we work to make sure that through our free tools, news publishers can publish high-quality journalism on our platform, connect directly with their readers, and make money to build a more sustainable business.