

Can I Trust This Software?

A democratic, decentralized guide to
evaluating the trustworthiness of any software

Can I Trust This Software?

- Is This Software What I Think It Is?
- Can I Trust The People Who Created It?
- Does It Really Do What It Claims To?
- Does It Do Anything Else I Don't Want It To?
- Has It Been Hacked?
- If I Start Using This Software Could I Get Screwed Later?
- Will It Continue To Grow and Improve?
- Can My Data Be Abused? Can My Use Be Surveilled?
- Is It Clear Which Human Is Responsible for Each Piece of Data or Post?
- Is The Software Controlled By Its Users?
- Can Users Collaborate Together Safely?
- Are There Democratic Mechanisms To Uphold and Protect Civil Rights?

Is This Software What I Think It Is?

- Is the software 100% open source so that programmers can see, evaluate and contribute to its code? ***Mandatory***
- Is it used and trusted by a wide range of different people/groups? ***Desirable***

Can I Trust The People Who Created It?

- Has it been developed by a number of people from different organizations? **Desirable**
- Is there a clear roadmap for future development? **Desirable**
- Is the project open to contributions from outside the core team? **Mandatory**
- Are there ways to provide feedback on bugs and feature requests and are they addressed over time? **Mandatory**
- Is there a code of conduct for contributors? **Desirable**

Does It Really Do What It Claims To?

- Is it well documented and described in clear language?
Mandatory
- Has the software been reviewed, audited or endorsed by trustworthy third parties? ***Mandatory***

Does It Do Anything Else I Don't Want It To?

- Has the software passed a security audit by a trustworthy independent security firm? **Mandatory**
- Is the software re-audited periodically? **Desirable**
- Are there a lot of people using it to identify anything strange? **Desirable**
- Are there a lot of different developers involved from different organizations? **Desirable**

Has It Been Hacked?

- Can I verify the digital signature of the software I have installed against the signature reported on a secure website controlled by the core developers? **Mandatory**
- Is it built in such a way that it supports “reproducible builds” so that the integrity of each version can be evaluated? **Desirable**
- Are there a lot of people using it to identify anything strange? **Desirable**
- Are there a lot of different developers involved from different organizations? **Desirable**

If I Start Using This Software Could I Get Screwed Later?

- Is it open source? **Mandatory**
- Is the open source library “copy-left” so that anyone who builds off of it has to make their improvements available to everyone? **Mandatory**
- Are there a lot of people using regularly? **Desirable**
- Are there a lot of different developers involved from different organizations? **Desirable**

Will It Continue To Grow and Improve?

- Are there ways to provide feedback on bugs and feature requests and are they addressed over time? **Mandatory**
- Does the software have a way to sustainably finance its continued development through fair and reasonable usage fees? **Mandatory**
- Is there a built-in mechanism that ensures people cannot use it without contributing their fair share? **Mandatory**
- Is there a clear roadmap for future development? **Desirable**

Can My Data Be Abused? Can My Use Be Surveilled?

- Are there ways for you to permanently delete your data if you want to? **Mandatory**
- If you do not delete or modify your data, can it be deleted or modified by anyone else without your consent? **Mandatory**
- No one other than the directly relevant users of the app ever have access to data. For example, no “administrators” or developers can ever access that data. **Mandatory**
- Does the software support strong “end-to-end” encryption for messages and posts? **Mandatory**
- Does the software provide guarantees about how your data will be shared and the ability to customize your settings? **Mandatory**
- Is the software 100% open source so that these guarantees can be evaluated? **Mandatory**
- Has the software passed a data safety audit? **Desirable**

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Is It Clear Which Human Is Responsible for Each Piece of Data or Post?

- Can every piece of data or post on the system be traced to a specific action of an individual human being? **Mandatory**
- Is this data provenance unforgeable and permanently preserved? **Mandatory**
- Can every user of the system easily determine this data provenance for themselves, without outside assistance? **Mandatory**

Is The Software Controlled By Its Users?

- Are there a clear and openly accessible bylaws for the oversight and development of the software? **Mandatory**
- Is the control of the software 100% in the hands of its users through an enforceable process of direct democracy? **Mandatory**
- Is it legally impossible for the organization that manages the software to be sold to private party? **Mandatory**
- Is it legally impossible for the oversight of the software to be taken out of the hands of its user base? **Mandatory**

Can Users Collaborate Together Safely?

- Can users collaborate without surveillance or interference by anyone, including the developers of the software?
Mandatory
- Are there mechanisms for users to productively and safely explore similarities and differences of experience of perspective within and across groups? **Desirable**
- Are there effective and enjoyable tools for deliberative decision-making? **Desirable**

Are There Democratic Mechanisms To Uphold and Protect Civil Rights?

- Does the software have in-built democratically enforced safeguard that allow users to uphold and protect civil rights? **Mandatory**
- Do individual users and groups of users have the ability to curate, moderate and filter their own spaces, feeds, etc.? **Mandatory**
- Does it articulate and explain what it can and should be used for and how that is intrinsically enforced? **Mandatory**
- Is it possible to freely use the software for all other purposes as directed by its individual users? **Mandatory**
- Are there democratic and representative processes for addressing alleged harms on the platform (e.g. user juries)? **Desirable**
- Are there specific time-limits and review processes for decisions made by user juries? **Desirable**