

Tips to Identify Fake News

Spotting fake news can be difficult. Even people who are aware of the damage that fake news can cause may not realize they're reading or viewing fake news until a friend or a legitimate media outlet identifies the bogus¹ report for them.

1. Check the history and reputation of the author and publication

If an article is being shared on Facebook or Twitter, you can see immediately the publication where the article originated. Browse to the publication's site to view past articles on the same or similar topics. Red flags are raised if the articles share a certain political viewpoint, if they are riddled with typos or grammatical errors, or if they are all written by the same author.

Most fake news sites are fly-by-night operations that have existed for only a few weeks or months. Knowing when a site's domain was registered can help to identify fake news. Find out how long a site has been around by entering its address in the Domain Age Checker run by [Website SEO Checker](https://websiteseochecker.com/domain-age-checker/) (<https://websiteseochecker.com/domain-age-checker/>). If a site is sharing a popular article that is attempting to disgrace a politician currently running for office, for example, but the website itself has existed for a short time, it's likely that the article and site are not trustworthy.

2. Determine whether other outlets are reporting the same news

When a big news event occurs, multiple media organizations will report it, even when they didn't break the story. Search for other publications that have posted stories about the event or topic. If no other news outlets are reporting the story, be sceptical about the accuracy of the article or video.

3. Be leery² of sensational headlines

Fake news is designed to strike an immediate emotional chord in audiences by using an alarming headline. Often people share such a story based solely on the headline, without even reading the article itself. If a headline attacks a newsworthy figure, seems outlandish, or simply lacks the ring of truth, search the internet for reliable sources that confirm the accuracy of the story and the headline (which are often written by two different people).

¹ pretending to be real or true

² careful about something/somebody because you suspect that there may be a danger or problem, and trying to avoid doing it or dealing with them

4. Carefully scrutinize³ photos and other media that accompany the stories

A favorite technique of fake news purveyors⁴ is the use of eye-catching images or videos. While a picture can be worth a thousand words, it is worthless — and potentially damaging — if the image is intended to mislead viewers rather than inform them.

If you see a shocking or particularly engaging⁵ photo or video in an article, take a moment to determine whether the media pertains to the main gist of the story or is intended solely to create an emotional reaction in readers. Use a service such as TinEye (www.tinEye.com) to conduct a reverse image search. This search will show where else on the web the image appears, and it will indicate whether the image has been tampered with⁶. For many video clips that go viral, there is additional video footage that either isn't shown or hasn't yet been published that tells a different story. Photos that support a certain stance or viewpoint are sometimes staged or digitally edited to misrepresent the true content. In both instances it can be difficult to tell real from unreal.

Evaluate the trustworthiness of the immediate source of the image, the person who shared the media, and the outlet where it was originally published. A little time spent researching might show whether any of these sources has a particular agenda, or whether the person who captured or shared the photo could be spreading misinformation, intentionally⁷ or unintentionally.

5. Consider the reasons why *this* person is sharing *this* news with you at *this* time

One of the wonders of the digital age is that it has brought people with like-minded ideas and values together across communities, across the country, and across the world. However, digital technology has also led to a digital bubble for many people, who receive news and information only from sources that reinforce their existing biases⁸ and beliefs.

Social media users with strong political leanings may not immediately recognize that their Facebook friends who echo those viewpoints are spreading fake news. Just as with people over age 65 being the most susceptible⁹ to sharing fake news, it's possible that individuals who share your worldview might be knee-jerk sharing without properly vetting¹⁰ the source of the information.

³ to look at or examine somebody/something carefully

⁴ a person or company that supplies something

⁵ interesting or pleasant in a way that attracts your attention

⁶ to make changes to something without permission, especially in order to damage it

⁷ done in a way that was planned, not by chance

⁸ a strong feeling in favour of or against one group of people, or one side in an argument, often not based on fair judgement

⁹ very likely to be influenced, harmed or affected by something

¹⁰ to check the contents, quality, etc. of something carefully



6. Make sure the story isn't intended to be humorous

Sites as [The Onion](#) or [Der Postillon](#) are widely known as humor sites that have pilloried politicians and celebrities for decades. However, many people may not be aware that The Onion or Der Postillon are satirical, so they may share their articles believing them to be real and failing to identify them as satire. For example, Russian State media has more than once fallen for Der Postillons articles and cited them to be true in their country.

Before sharing a questionable or suspicious looking news item, consider that it may be intended to be satirical or humorous.

7. Do some research to determine whether there are any facts to support bold claims you hear on TV

Although fake news is closely identified with social media, television remains a powerful tool for spreading misinformation. Regardless of how well trusted a TV news source or network may be, look deeper into questionable facts or statements espoused on the medium before accepting the information as true.

The vast majority of the journalists and publishing professionals at print and broadcast media organizations are hard-working and talented individuals, but they are still prone¹¹ to occasional mistakes that require corrections and retractions. Take the time to make sure that the news presented by these sources is corroborated and verifiable.

8. Be a voice that helps stop the spread of fake news

Raise awareness within your digital circle of family, friends, and associates about the dangers of fake news. If you notice that someone is sharing fake news, speak up. Alert the person and their audience that the “news” item they posted or shared is false. Tell them about the tips and resources in this guide so they will know how to identify fake news and help combat it.

adapted from : <https://onlinedegrees.und.edu/masters-cyber-security/tips-for-students-on-how-to-identify-fake-news/> (30.01.2022)

¹¹ likely to suffer from something or to do something bad