

SPOTTING “FAKE NEWS”

DON'T BE SO QUICK TO CLICK! WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU LIKE OR SHARE

Experts say you should avoid clicking on or sharing information that isn't true. These days, however, the Internet has a lot of “fake news.” That means articles, videos and posts that pretend to be accurate, but include lies and exaggerations. They often look so... real. How can you tell what's a lie and what's credible? Here are some tips.

CHECK YOUR EMOTIONS

People who create fake news need us to help spread it around, by clicking on it and sharing it. Studies show that articles that make you feel a strong emotion go further, faster. So, many fake news articles have headlines that are

shocking, exciting, worrying or intriguing. If they can make you feel something—good or bad—you're more likely to share it.

You can combat that by simply... waiting. Give it a minute, and think about what the headline is saying. Consider whether it's actually true or just trying to attract your interest.

Just because an article gives you a strong feeling, it doesn't mean it is definitely fake. But it does mean it's best to hold off clicking on it or sharing it, to give yourself time to think more critically about it

GOOGLE IT

Put keywords from the article or headline into Google. Was this news covered by lots of other news organizations, including large, well-known ones and ones that you trust? If it's such a big deal, it likely would have been covered by other media. If it wasn't widely covered, you should question it.

CHECK THE SOURCE

Who wrote the article? Have you heard of them or the company they work for? Google them—you may discover articles about how credible they are (or aren't). Look at what else they've written. If they're in the habit of producing



fake articles, the one you're reading could be, too. Next, think about the people quoted in the article. Are they real people? Google them to find out if they have the expertise they claim to have, and to find out whether they're likely to have said the things in the article.

CHECK THE LITTLE THINGS

- Credible news articles usually have a by-line and a photo credit (with the names of the author and the photographer).

Articles that make you feel a strong emotion go further, faster

- Articles shouldn't be riddled with spelling mistakes and they should be as unbiased as possible, looking at issues from different angles.
- Check the URL (website address). Lots of fake news sites try to fool you with a URL that's almost right (for instance, .com.co instead of .com).

POINT-OF-VIEW

Is the article one-sided? Look for missing points of view. Journalists are trained to look at all sides of a story. They don't always accomplish that, but if an article only has one point of view, it may be suspect. If there is a missing point of view (for instance, that of people who aren't in the majority), broaden your reading to include more diverse news sources.

HAVE NEWS SOURCES YOU TRUST

If you know what credible journalism looks and sounds like, it will be easier to spot the fake stuff.

Build a collection of websites you trust. You can start with some of the big, national and international news sites that are well known. Then find other sites that interest you and consistently do excellent reporting. When you see something that you think might be fake, check to see if that news was also published by your favourite credible sites. If it wasn't, and it's (supposedly) a really big news story, that might be a sign that the post or article is fake.

THINK ABOUT WHO BENEFITS

Consider why the article or post was created and distributed. People rarely spend a lot of time doing something for absolutely no reason. Are they trying to get you to share the article? Do they want to sell you something? Is the article trying to sway your opinion? Those things aren't illegal, but thinking about who benefits will give you insight into the post itself.

ERR ON THE SIDE OF CAUTION

Trust your instincts. If a post, video or article is making you think, "That sounds weird," then either check it out, or ignore it and move on, without sharing or clicking on it. We all have an online reputation—our followers come to know the quality of what we share on social media. If you're always sharing stuff that could be fake, do yourself a favour and stop being so quick to click. Thinking critically before you spread also helps the Internet as a whole—you won't be helping the fake news creators spread their misinformation.

You won't always be able to spot every fake news article. Even trained journalists are sometimes fooled by videos and posts that seem real, but contain lies or exaggerations. But it's important to take the first step, which is to stop and think about a post before you share or click on it.



JOURNALISM 101: ACCURACY

Even credible media make mistakes. But that's not the same as "fake news," which contains lies or exaggerations on purpose. Some large news organizations have an "ombudsperson" who looks into errors and corrects them. For more information about how journalists ensure their information is accurate, check out *For the Record's* "Checking and Double-Checking the Facts"

CHECK IT OUT



DID YOU KNOW?

As part of their job, many journalists post on social media, often while they're still covering a story. It helps boost readership and makes it easier for readers to find articles. These days, cameras in smart phones are so good they can produce broadcast-quality videos and images. In fact, there's a whole branch of journalism known as "mojo," which stands for mobile journalism—news reporting on the go.



EDUCATION CONNECTION

Discuss!

In five years, do you think there will be more, or less, fake news on the Internet? Why?

Check it Out!

Fake news is 70% more likely to be shared on Twitter, according to a study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In their study, false information spread to up to 100,000 people, while true facts almost never spread beyond 1,000 people.

Investigate!

Think about an article or social media post that you suspect may not be completely accurate. Discuss what it is that makes you suspicious. How are you going to investigate it?



DIG DEEPER:

Links to more Information

Here's a great online game by the BBC. In it, you're a BBC journalist who has to do social media about a breaking news story. You'll work with BBC editors and sources and make decisions about whether to post or not. (The game all takes place inside the game—nothing is actually posted online.)

BBC iREPORTER



The International Fact-Checking Network has members around the world who check facts to help uncover fake news and debunk hoaxes.

FACT CHECKING