

TECH BOOT CAMP: Spotting Fake News

What is fake news?

PolitiFact described fake news as fabricated content designed to fool readers and subsequently made viral through the Internet to large groups of people who further disseminate it.

Clickbait

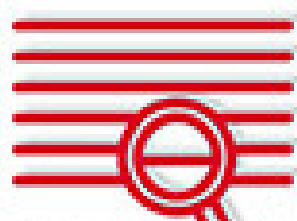
Clickbaiting is the intentional act of over-promising or otherwise misrepresenting — in a headline, on social media, in an image, or some combination — what you're going to find when you read a story on the web. It is often characterized by wording like, "You won't believe it" or "What happened next will shock you," or other unverifiable assertions in a desperate attempt to spark your curiosity into a click.

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



READ BEYOND

Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?



CHECK THE AUTHOR

Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.



CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.



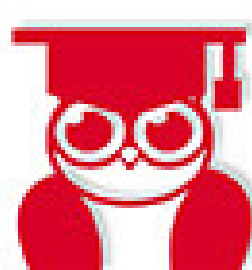
IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



ASK THE EXPERTS

Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

What makes a news story fake?

1. It can't be verified.

A fake news article may or may not have links in it tracing its sources; if it does, these links may not lead to articles outside of the site's domain or may not contain information pertinent to the article topic.

2. Fake news appeals to emotion.

Fake news plays on your feelings – it makes you angry or happy or scared. This is to ensure you won't do anything as pesky as fact-checking.

3. Authors usually aren't experts.

Most of these authors aren't even journalists, but paid trolls.

4. It can't be found anywhere else.

If you look up the main idea of a fake news article, you might not find any other news outlet (real or not) reporting on the issue.

5. Fake news comes from fake sites.

Did your article come from abcnews.com.co? Or mercola.com? Realnewsrightnow.com? These and a host of other URLs are fake news sites.

Helpful Resources

FactCheck

www.FactCheck.Org

A project of the nonpartisan, nonprofit Annenberg Public Policy Center, which monitors the factual accuracy of what is said by major US political players, such as politicians and lobbyists.

PolitiFact

www.PolitiFact.com

Staff from the Tampa Bay Times publish original statements by US political players, check their factual accuracy, and assign each a rating ranging from "True" to "Pants on Fire."

Media Bias/Fact Check

mediabiasfactcheck.com

Includes a searchable database of media sources and articles that are categorized according to bias, from extreme left to extreme right. Note that "bias" is subjective, and not the same thing as "fact."

Snopes

www.snopes.com

An independent website that covers urban legends, modern folklore, internet rumours, and other stories of questionable origin.

Truth or Fiction

TruthOrFiction.com

Another independent myth-busting website, this one focuses on dubious stories that resurface year after year, instead of "breaking" news and current events.

Hoaxy

hoaxy.iuni.iu.edu

A search engine developed by researchers at Indiana University that visualizes how fake news and other claims spread across social media.

B.S. Detector

bsdetector.tech

This browser extension can be installed to alert you to unreliable news sources. Curated by Open Sources, a project of researchers at Merrimack College.