



THEME OF THE MONTH  
MARCH 2022

# FAKE NEWS



# WHAT IS FAKE NEWS?

Fake news is “news that conveys or incorporates fake, fabricated, or deliberately misleading information, or that is characterised as or accused of doing so.”

Oxford English Dictionary (2019)

Fake news is designed to manipulate people’s perceptions of real facts, events and statements. It is information presented as news that is known by its promoter to be false based on facts that are demonstrably incorrect, or statements or events that verifiably did not happen.

The creators of fake news distribute unreliable and misleading information such as conspiracies, rumours, state propaganda, dubious science, hate speech, malware and ransomware often through disconcerting clickbait headlines and news stories.



## TYPES OF FAKE NEWS

- **Satire** – made-up stories that aren’t meant to be taken seriously, written to joke about the news or famous people.
- **Clickbait** – eye-catching but misleading headlines, designed to get people to click on links to make money or views for a website.
- **Propaganda** – false facts which are written to promote a political agenda or a set of ideas.
- **Mistakes** – sometimes accidents can happen, but a trusted source will always correct errors in their stories and say when they’ve got things wrong.

## TYPES OF FALSE FACTS

1. **Disinformation** – fake or misleading stories created and shared deliberately, often by a writer who might have a financial or political motive, e.g. propaganda.
2. **Misinformation** – this also means fake or misleading stories, but in this case the stories may not have been deliberately created or shared with the intention to mislead.

# THE DANGERS OF FAKE NEWS

While some examples of fake news may seem innocent or just an attempt at fun, a lot of it can be malicious and even dangerous. Fake news is created to change people's beliefs, attitudes, or perceptions, so they will ultimately change their behaviour. This means if you fall into the trap of believing fake news, your beliefs and your decisions are being driven by someone else's agenda. In some parts of the world, there can be legal consequences for publishing and sharing fake news.



## SPOT FAKE NEWS

Use these tips to check anything you read online that you are not sure about:

- **The story** – what are they trying to say? Is it an ad or a joke? Look to see if you can find the same story somewhere else.
- **The author** – is it someone's opinion or a fact? Real news will most likely have a link to the writer's details, but if there's no author, dig deeper.
- **The website** – are there spelling or grammar mistakes? What's the URL? Check the address bar at the top – most trusted URLs end with “.com”, “.co.uk”, “.net”, “.gov”, “.org”, “.mil” and “.edu”
- **The date** – is the story recent or old? It could be outdated or a copy of something that happened years ago. Computer programs called bots post anytime and often, so be wary of this.
- **Multiple Sources** – don't just rely on a single article. The more you read from various sources, the more likely you can draw accurate conclusions. Also consider diverse sources and perspectives, for example, news from different countries or authors with different backgrounds.
- **Repost carefully** – fake news relies on believers to repost, retweet, or otherwise forward false information. If you're uncertain as to the authenticity of an article, think twice or hold off on sharing it with others.



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# HOW TO BE MEDIA LITERATE

- **Be curious** - independently verify the source (by performing a separate search) and independently verify the information (through mainstream news sources and fact-checking sites).
- **Be reflective** - if you have an immediate emotional reaction to a news article or source: pause, reflect, investigate. Exciting an emotional reaction is a primary goal of fake news producers. Do not be part of a viral fake news spiral!
- **Actively investigate your news sources** - select news sources known for high-quality, investigative reporting. Search these sources directly. Don't settle for web search results or social media news feeds. Social media algorithms are designed to present the news that reinforces your current views, not a balanced view.
- **Look for in-depth coverage** - look for lengthy articles that better capture the complexity of topics and events. One or two paragraphs is not sufficient.

# HOW TO BE SOCIAL MEDIA SMART

Flicking through social media, it's easy to be taken in by a flawless selfie, dramatic videos or shocking stories. But remember, not every image we see is real.

Tips for checking what is and isn't real:

- **Images** - look for clues in the picture and do a reverse image search to find where it came from.
- **Video** - use a video checking tool to see the action frame by frame, where you can spot anything that doesn't look quite right.

You can also look out for:

- **Source** – who's posted the story? Have a look at their previous posts and their bio or 'about' section to find out why they are sharing.
- **Followers** – how many followers do they have and who are they? This can tell you a lot about the person or page that is posting the stories.
- **Verified** – do they have a blue tick? Many social platforms use this to show verified accounts, which means they are real and most likely trustworthy.
- **Response** – what are other people saying? Replies, comments or trending posts might show different sides to the story.

# STOP FAKE NEWS FROM GOING VIRAL

What can you do to stop the spread of bad information online?

## STOP AND THINK

You will want to help family and friends and keep them in the loop. So when you receive new advice - whether by email, WhatsApp, Facebook or Twitter - you might quickly forward it on to them.

Experts say the number one thing you can do to halt misinformation is to simply stop and think. If you have any doubts about the source, pause, and check it out further.

## CHECK YOUR SOURCE

Before you forward it on, ask some basic questions about where the information comes from. It's a big red flag if the source is "a friend of a friend" or "my mum's colleague's neighbour". Experts are not infallible. But they are much more reliable than a stranger's distant relative on WhatsApp.

## BEWARE OF EMOTIONAL POSTS

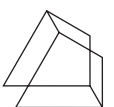
It's the stuff that gets us fearful, angry, anxious, or joyful that tends to really go viral.

"Fear is one of the biggest drivers that allows misinformation to thrive," says Claire Wardle of First Draft, an organisation that helps journalists tackle online misinformation.

## THINK ABOUT BIASES

Are you sharing something because you know it's true - or just because you agree with it?

Carl Miller, research director of the Centre for the Analysis of Social Media at think tank Demos, says we're more likely to share posts that reinforce our existing beliefs.



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# WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT FAKE NEWS?

Google and Facebook have announced new measures to tackle fake news with the introduction of reporting and flagging tools. Media organisations like the BBC and Channel 4 have also established fact checking sites. While these are welcome developments, digital media literacy and developing skills to critically evaluate information are essential skills for anyone navigating the internet and especially for young people.

The vast amount of information available online and rise in fake news highlights the need for critical thinking. Children need to develop critical thinking from an early age. This is a key skill for young people to develop as they enter into third level education and prepare themselves for the workplace.

## FACT CHECKING SITES

[Snopes](#)

[PolitiFact](#)

[BBC Reality Check](#)

[Channel 4 Fact Check](#)

## LSP'S SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT TEAM

If you have any concerns at all, please don't hesitate to contact a member of our Safeguarding and Prevent team:

**Safeguarding and Prevent Officer: Andy Hamer**

Email: [andy.hamer@learningskillspartnership.com](mailto:andy.hamer@learningskillspartnership.com)

Number: 07526 168286

**Deputy Safeguarding Officer: Phil Cawthra**

Email: [phil.cawthra@learningskillspartnership.com](mailto:phil.cawthra@learningskillspartnership.com)

Number: 07773 537452





# MORE INFORMATION

[www.learningskillspartnership.com](http://www.learningskillspartnership.com)  
[info@learningskillspartnership.com](mailto:info@learningskillspartnership.com)

