

WAYS TO IDENTIFY FAKE NEWS

Fake news is spread mainly ON Facebook and Twitter. Both social media platforms have pledged to do more to identify fake news and stop its spread. But fake news is not spread BY Facebook or Twitter. It's spread by the human users of these services. Check out these tips to help you discern and spot the bogus stories.

Avoid sites whose names end with "lo" such as "Politicalo" or "Newslo." They all belong to a network of sites that inject false "facts" and misleading interpretations into true stories, then distribute the poisoned fruits.

Domain names that end in ".com.co" are usually masquerading as legitimate sources. The same goes for ".com.cc" or any other ".com" name that has additional letters at its end.

If mainstream media is not reporting a story, it's more likely that there is no story, rather than that the mainstream media does not want to report it. Be suspicious of any story that complains, "*mainstream media is ignoring this!*"

THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS!

Beware of headlines and body text that use lots of capitalized words. All-caps text stirs up angry, anxious emotions in readers, making them more inclined to share without thinking.

If a story is written in a tone of outrage, it is likely to make you very angry too. Take a deep breath and check the story's claims via Google or Bing before sharing it.

The lack of a date, location, or author's name in an article should move your BS-detector's needle. If your BS-detector is missing or faulty, try the B.S. Detector browser plugin (find at www.bsdetector.tech/). It checks every page you visit, comparing the domain names to a database of domains belonging to unreliable or questionable news sources, and will alert you with a banner across the top of the page if what you're reading is potentially bogus. Links are categorized as Fake News, Satire, Extreme Bias, Conspiracy Theory, Rumor Mill, Junk Science, Hate Group, Clickbait, and Proceed With Caution (sources that may be reliable but require further verification).

Check the comments left on a story, if any are available. You may find someone has already debunked or verified the story.

A picture has more emotional impact than 1,000 words, and pictures can be faked too. Google Image Search is your best tool for learning where else a given picture has appeared.

Why Does Fake News Exist and Flourish?

You may wonder why so many fake news sites exist. For the most part, they are created for revenue-generation or propaganda. One prolific purveyor boasted that he made over \$10,000 a month from ad revenues on his fake news sites.

Kids in their teens and twenties are not reading newspapers or watching television news. By and large, they get their information and worldview from what they see on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Youtube. So it's no wonder they have trouble distinguishing fact from fiction, but the problem of digital literacy certainly extends into other age groups.

The bottom line here is due diligence. Don't share a story without checking its veracity. It seldom takes more than ten seconds to verify or debunk a news story using Google. That's ten seconds well spent to avoid contributing to the confusion that is damaging society online and off, and to avoid the embarrassment of being called out by your friends.