

Fake News



Fake news is false information; it can also include propaganda which promotes a certain opinion or point of view. Fake news is written and published to look like authentic news to trick viewers. It is also known as hoax news - something fake or untrue that is presented as real. Fake news is often written with the purpose of initially shocking or interesting the readers enough that they will want to continue reading.

Fake news websites and channels push their content in an attempt to mislead viewers. They aim to spread misinformation via social media networks and word-of-mouth.

Types of Fake News

Sometimes the headlines for news articles are written to grab the attention of the viewer so they will continue to read it when in reality, the headline does not actually reflect the content of the article.

Often, advertisements, pages or online articles are used to create excitement for the viewer, encouraging them to click onto other links provided by the creator. Clickbait like this normally leads to more advertisements.

Another source of fake news is poor journalism. If facts are not correctly researched and checked before being published, viewers can be misled with incorrect information.

Propaganda is biased and used to promote one side of an argument or opinion. This type of fake news is commonly utilised in politics when one political party is attempting to promote their policies.

Satire stories are written purely for entertainment purposes and can be quite humorous. They are usually written about people or a topical event or issue. Satirical authors often use wit, irony and sarcasm to criticise someone or something. These pieces used to commonly be written for newspapers or magazines but are now routinely discovered on social media. Some social media websites are created purely to share satirical stories. Unfortunately, sometimes readers do not regularly follow the pages or writers so do not realise they are satire.



Fake News and Social Media

Information can be created, published and shared online by anyone, whether it is genuine or not. Today, social media is one of the main platforms to publish fake news. Fake accounts, names, pages and domains are frequently created to hide the identity of who is creating the fake news, pages and clickbait advertisements. Many news outlets have social media pages to share their news stories, making it difficult to distinguish between fake or authentic news.



How to Spot Fake News

When you are browsing social media, reading news articles or researching topics online, you need to use critical thinking skills to determine whether something is fake news or not. If it sounds too amazing or too shocking to be true, there is a high chance it is fake news. Below are some tips to help you determine if the information you are viewing is authentic or a hoax.

- Confirm the sources of news articles and stories you read. Has it come from a reputable news outlet or website that you know and can trust?
- When you carry out research, it is always good to use multiple sources to check the information you gather.
- Is it an opinionated article or story? If so, who has produced it? If it is a story showing a negative viewpoint of a political party, has it come from an opposing party?
- It is important to check that a news article states the journalist's name who wrote it. Does it have a recent date on it? If the date is old, the facts might now be irrelevant - new, more up-to-date information may be available.
- How professional does it look? Incorrect spelling and grammar in advertisements and stories are a sign that it might not be authentic.
- It is always a good idea to read stories about the same topic from different sources to confirm what you have read or to give you different viewpoints.
- Remember that photos and images can easily be altered through editing software programmes. You can do an internet search on a photo to confirm where it originated from.



Questions

1. What other words mean the same as **authentic**? Tick **two**.

- ☐ true
- ☐ incorrect
- ☐ negative
- ☐ genuine

2. Draw **three** lines to match the word with its meaning.

propaganda

To trick or give untrue information.

humorous

Stories that are biased and one-sided.

hoax

To be funny.

3. What is the type of fake news that encourages viewers to click on other links and pages?

4. Fill in the missing words.

We need to use _____ thinking skills to _____ whether it is _____ news or not.

5. How is satire different from news stories?

6. 'Unfortunately, sometimes readers do not regularly follow the pages or writers so do not realise they are satire.' Why could this be considered unfortunate?

7. Explain how you can check if a news story is genuine or fake news.

8. Explain the problems with social media and fake news.

9. Name four news outlets that you can trust.

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10. In your own words, explain how fake news can have a negative impact. Include at least two reasons.
