

Fake News and Internet Hoaxes



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Based on the tutorial from:

"What is fake news?" at GCFLearnFree.org

<https://www.gcflearnfree.org/thenow/what-is-fake-news/1/>

What is fake news?

- News containing untrue information disguised as a credible news source
- Can take several forms such as
 - News articles and reports
 - Video and audio clips
 - Messages over social media
- Can be from variety of outlets
 - Newspapers
 - TV news channels
 - Online news and websites

Is fake news something new?

- Term may be relatively new but hoaxes and deliberate misinformation are not!
- In the past used as a propaganda tool by various groups and in tabloid publications to drive sales
- In days of traditional newspapers and TV, fake news easier to spot and coverage is limited



Is fake news something new?

Gains prominence now because

- Technology has enabled almost anyone to publish or spread news easily, instantly with a global reach
- In some countries, many people do not trust mainstream news media
- Political leaders and supporters are exploiting fake news and ease of spreading to their own ends

Why is fake news a problem?

- Responsible for a great deal of misinformation
- More and more people are believing fake news without bothering to fact check or even read beyond the headlines
- This acceptance of incorrect information has led to confusion, panic, and an inability to discuss the actual facts surrounding current events
- The ubiquitous reach of the Internet and social media has greatly extended the reach and influence of fake news
- May have even influenced outcome of elections in some countries

How did fake news become such a problem?

- People will usually believe what they want to believe!
 - Natural tendency to seize onto information that fits into their thinking, ideology, beliefs, biases and prejudices
- Sharing of a piece of news over social media and instant messaging will reach a very wide audience very quickly; compounded by the ability to re-share the same news over and over again thereby reaching even wider audience
- A piece of false information repeated enough times will be perceived as true by many people
- The correction or retraction, if any, of a fake news item usually does not enjoy the same attention or traction

Why do people create fake news?

- Influencing public opinion for political or social gains
 - Swing public opinion on political and social issues
- Financial motives
 - Sensational stories that feed into the narrative of targeted groups generate traffic to fake news sites
 - Increased advertising revenue through these visits
- Business gains against competitor(s)
 - Influence public's confidence against competitor by spreading false or misleading information

What's being done about it?

- Social media and search sites now try harder to scan and flag false/misleading information being offered up
- The best way to prevent fake news from spreading is to teach users how to identify fake news themselves

This means you!!!



How can I tell if a news item is fake or a hoax?

Develop a habit of checking the accuracy of any news you read/receive, especially ones you find through social media or chat groups

- Use a search engine to verify the news
 - Utilise several independent sources, if possible, especially if the news is extraordinary or extra-sensational
- Be aware of
 - Old news masquerading/circulating as new
 - Associating images/videos from a totally different news item with the news in question
 - Satires, parodies, jokes

How can I tell if a news item is fake or a hoax?

- Use fact-checking sites like [PolitiFact.com](https://www.politifact.com), [FactCheck.org](https://www.factcheck.org) and [Snopes.com](https://www.snopes.com)

These are reliable sources that specialize in fact checking and debunking inaccurate stories and claims

Take care before sharing news online!



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.

IFLA

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

Source:

https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/topics/info-society/images/how_to_spot_fake_news.pdf

Fake news/hoax example

Received through Whatsapp chat group:

Breaking News. "Donald Trump arrested" Please if you see two police officers arresting Donald Trump on your computer screen, Do not click to read the news. It is a Virus . Someone has done that and it has infected their computer. Please send to all in your contact list . Pass This On



Fake news/hoax example

Killer Clowns in Canada

On 3 October 2016 the Global Sun web site published an article reporting that weapons-wielding clowns from the U.S. had invaded Canada and murdered 23 victims there.

<http://www.snopes.com/scary-clowns-kill-23-people-in-canada/>



Finally ...

Any questions???

