
Fake news or hoax news websites deliberately publish hoaxes, propaganda, and disinformation, using social media to drive web traffic and amplify their effect. 
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fake_news_website

Another definition: “intentionally fabricated claims that are presented as true with the intent to deceive.” – comment on an article by ‘angesichts’ at http://tinyurl.com/jybopf8

Strategy 1: Check the date

Older articles sometimes recirculate. Even if initial reports were proven to be incorrect, misunderstandings, or bad reporting articles recirculate. Someone popular shares a link and all the sudden what is old and had been debunked is out there again. Older articles have likely been superseded by newer ones.

Strategy 2: Check the byline

If there is no author or the name sounds fake, the content you’re looking at may be an ad, a press release, or some other form of non-news content. Opinion pieces tend to be marked with bylines like “contributor”, “op-ed”. Press releases may say “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” or mention the name of the PR firm releasing it such as PRNewswire.

Strategy 3: Evaluate the tone

Many blogs don’t try to be objective. They are only the opinions of their authors.
Strategy 4: Reverse image search

Photos can be doctored using software like Adobe Photoshop. These edits may be deceptive sometimes. We can use this technology to fix zits and red eyes in photos, but Iran can also make their military more powerful by adding additional rocket launches into a salvo with the same technology. And fake news publishers can use pictures to falsely illustrate their stories. Stock photos are also often used by scammers. Right click the image you’re suspicious of, and copy the address of the image. Go to https://www.google.com/imghp and then click on the photo button to start searching by image. Either paste the URL of the image in or click to upload an image you’ve saved to your computer, and then click Search by image. Reverse image searches are typically not perfect, but can give you an idea.
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Strategy 5: Reverse video search

While it’s more difficult, videos can be doctored to change original footage. A video search tool is available at [http://amnestyusa.org/citizenevidence](http://amnestyusa.org/citizenevidence). Videos are only going to get easier to doctor over time. View them with a critical eye. Recut videos are often posted by random internet users. Try adding “full video” to your search to find original source videos.

Strategy 6: Check the URL

URL, uniform resource locator, is the website address. [www.clickhole.com](http://www.clickhole.com) in this example. Web addresses that end in “lo.com” like newslo.com tend to be scams. Sites with addresses like “.com.co” and foreign sites ending with “.ru” also tend to be scams. Misspellings, similar spellings, typos, and visual fakes impersonating real websites at different URL addresses are also used by scammers.

Strategy 7: Evaluate crazy claims

This article claims that a company will donate its employees’ wages to charity?!

Strategy 8: Is it satire, a joke, or maybe April Fools’ Day-related?

Satire is *the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people’s stupidity or vices, particularly in the context of contemporary politics and
Avoiding Fake News and Scams

*other topic issues* according to https://www.google.com/search?q=define+satire. This article clearly ridicules the pictured man and greatly exaggerates as well. (*Clickhole* is a satire site. Wikipedia has a list of others for you to check at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_satirical_news_websites.)

**Strategy 9: Google search something on the page you’re not sure about**

Try searching Google for a phrase from a page (or even its URL) plus the word “hoax” to see if something you’ve run into something fake.

**Strategy 10: Avoid or ignore appeals to emotion**

This hoax page mentions mutating DNA, which is scary! But they’re trying to trick you. You can safely ignore any appeals to fear, anger, etc. Other common appeals to emotion include get rich quick schemes, “one simple trick” to miraculously cure diseases, doomsday predictions, pop-up messages saying your computer is infected, and something that no one else (supposedly) has found yet. None of these are legitimate content. “Clickbait” headlines often exaggerate to gain your attention.
Avoiding Fake News and Scams

**Strategy 11: Use a fact checking website**

There are whole websites devoted to tracking the origin of information online. Some focus on internet culture ("memes"), others on politics, or news, scams, urban legends, April Fools’ Day pranks and more. These include:

- [http://factcheck.org](http://factcheck.org)
- [https://www.opensecrets.org](https://www.opensecrets.org)
- [http://www.newsbusters.org/](http://www.newsbusters.org/)
- [http://votesmart.org/](http://votesmart.org/)
- [http://www.politifact.com/](http://www.politifact.com/)
- [http://knowyourmeme.com/](http://knowyourmeme.com/)

**Strategy 12: Know the parts of a webpage**

Webpages change all the time, but like newspapers have standard pieces. Sites typically have logos, headers, and footers along with the main body content. Articles have titles, bylines, images, captions, and main body text. There are also display ads, menu bars, various boxes labeled “ad”, “sponsored content”, “from our partners”, “paid content” and more. If something looks funny it could be illegitimate. If something that looks like an article or a story is not the main focus of the page but instead is in one of those boxes, it’s likely not as legitimate as the
article you meant to read. Also look for “About” sections of sites to potentially determine their origin, who funds them, their mission, etc.

Strategy 13: Don’t click, like, share, comment, or engage with spam content

People share junk on sites like Facebook. We recommend you only share, comment, or click like on obviously legitimate posts related to your friends and family, and any business or organizations you trust. Avoid any contests, ads, “click like if you…”, “click to support” posts. These posts often feature gruesome, gut wrenching images. They’re likely photoshopped (See Strategy 4). These posts virally spread before anyone can verify their authenticity.
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**Strategy 14: Watch out for personalization**

Personalized news can be neat. Google, Facebook, and others track what you’ve clicked in the past and try to show you more content like that. This can lead to super specialized articles being sent your way that are old or aren’t newsworthy. Personalization like this can spin out of control into filter bubbles of confirmation bias. Occasionally read news from outside your usual sources to combat this.

**Strategy 15: Clear out your cookies**

Advertisers and other websites track you online using a technology called cookies. Cookies can be helpful storing things like online shopping carts before you click buy. Cookies are placed on your computer and send information back to the site(s) they came from. Cookies can be deleted to make sure you’re seeing generic, non-personalized information.

**Strategy 16: Opt out of personalization**

Even after clearing away cookies, some sites are still able to track you unfortunately using technologies like Google Analytics and Facebook share buttons. Some specific websites let you opt out of this tracking.

**Fake news: How & Why?**

*How*

- **No gatekeepers** – anyone with access to technology and the Internet can post anything. Many of the tools scammers and fake news peddlers use, like Facebook, and Twitter, are free to use. Sites that allow comments often have a few rules in TERMS OF SERVICE, but these rules hinder few users.
- **Speed and information overload** – the internet allows what is posted to spread at the speed of light, before anyone can check it. And by the time one scam or lie has been investigated many others have taken its place.
- **Permanence of postings** – once you post something, it’s there forever. It doesn’t matter if the eyewitness report was wrong, that the first responder saw what happened incorrectly, that they told it to the news media when later interviewed incorrectly. Purveyors of fake news use these and any other scraps as sources for their stories. Even if fact checkers have
debunked a fake news story, the sources often remain accessible without their proper context. Efforts to suppress media often result in them gaining further prominence, as “the Internet routes around censorship.” (See also: the Streisand Effect: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Streisand_effect).

- **Search engine optimization** — search engine optimization, or SEO, is strategies that website owners use to attempt to have their websites show up higher in Google search results lists. These range from perfectly legitimate SEO practices like making sure every page has a title, structuring information well, and keeping content up-to-date. But fake news publishers can use SEO tactics to trick Google into including their misleading or fraudulent pages more prominently. More people then see these pages, muddling the truth on whatever topic is at hand.

**Why**

- **To make a statement:** satire posts like those of *The Onion* usually espouse a specific political point of view.

- **To laugh at you:** many online pranks only become pranks when others fall for them. Don’t give their creators satisfaction.

- **Gain followers:** Twitter and Facebook accounts with many followers can be sold for real money. Wild claims and fake news attract a lot of attention, which unfortunately can be monetized through ads (see next bullet point).

- **Make money:** Impoverished teens in foreign countries make things up and post them. They make their stories as crazy as possible to reach as large an audience as possible so that the ads on their webpages get in front of the largest numbers of eyeballs possible. Scammers lie to deceive or hack you.

- **Influence politics:** whether through misleading or lying, creating and controlling public opinion is important. Rapidly spreading fake news can quickly change minds, persuade undecideds, or motivate voters.
What else can we do to fight fake news?

1. **Assume nothing** – do the ads make it seem like you’re on a seedy website? Does the organization have a stake in the news they’re reporting? Is the source biased? Is the article current? Is the information in a story relevant to what you were looking for?

2. **Wait for the news to shake out** – first reports are often inaccurate.

3. **Stick to trusted sources** – general interest news organizations like CNN, Fox News, NBC, ABC, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, etc. More niche news organizations or websites tend to be less trustworthy (although some are excellent).

4. **Resist the urge to share, or at least think before you share** – unless you’re sure it’s true, you contribute to the problems caused by fake news by linking, retweeting, sharing on Facebook, and emailing articles around.

5. **Investigate within reason** – If you think that a news article or something online sounds funny, try to track down the truth, but don’t go too far like the Pizzagate “self-investigator” did ([http://www.cbsnews.com/news/pizzagate-shooting-suspect-edgar-maddison-welch-facing-federal-charges/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/pizzagate-shooting-suspect-edgar-maddison-welch-facing-federal-charges/)). If it can’t be verified with other sources, it probably isn’t true.

6. **Remember that repetition does not equal truth** – politicians tend to repeat claims – whether or not they’re true – until they become true because they’ve repeated them so many times. Even trustworthy news organizations often hesitate to question figures of authority because they have to maintain their access to news sources.

7. **Install an ad blocker** – ad blockers like Adblock Plus can protect you from deceptive ads. Some ad blockers can even be installed on mobile devices.

8. **Ask someone you trust for help** – whether it’s your tech savvy friend, neighbor, relative, or a librarian, there’s no harm in asking someone else to help you figure out what’s going on with a website you’ve ran into.

9. **See more** – at [eapl.org/fakenews](http://eapl.org/fakenews)
Evaluating Information – Applying the CRAAP Test
Meriam Library 📘 California State University, Chico

When you search for information, you're going to find lots of it... but is it good information? You will have to determine that for yourself, and the CRAAP Test can help. The CRAAP Test is a list of questions to help you evaluate the information you find. Different criteria will be more or less important depending on your situation or need.

Key: ■ indicates criteria is for Web

Evaluation Criteria

Currency: *The timeliness of the information.*
- When was the information published or posted?
- Has the information been revised or updated?
- Does your topic require current information, or will older sources work as well?
- ■Are the links functional?

Relevance: *The importance of the information for your needs.*
- Does the information relate to your topic or answer your question?
- Who is the intended audience?
- ■Is the information at an appropriate level (i.e. not too elementary or advanced for your needs)?
- Have you looked at a variety of sources before determining this is one you will use?
- Would you be comfortable citing this source in your research paper?

Authority: *The source of the information.*
- Who is the author/publisher/source/sponsor?
- What are the author's credentials or organizational affiliations?
- ■Is the author qualified to write on the topic?
- Is there contact information, such as a publisher or email address?
- ■Does the URL reveal anything about the author or source?

Accuracy: *The reliability, truthfulness and correctness of the content.*
- Where does the information come from?
- Is the information supported by evidence?
- ■Has the information been reviewed or refereed?
- Can you verify any of the information in another source or from personal knowledge?
- Does the language or tone seem unbiased and free of emotion?
- Are there spelling, grammar or typographical errors?

Purpose: *The reason the information exists.*
- What is the purpose of the information? Is it to inform, teach, sell, entertain or persuade?
- Do the authors/sponsors make their intentions or purpose clear?
- ■Is the information fact, opinion or propaganda?
- Does the point of view appear objective and impartial?
- Are there political, ideological, cultural, religious, institutional or personal biases?
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 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.
For more information on this topic:

- [https://www.coursera.org/learn/news-literacy](https://www.coursera.org/learn/news-literacy)
- [http://www.allsides.com/](http://www.allsides.com/)
- [https://consumerist.com/2017/03/06/4-scams-you-should-always-be-aware-of/](https://consumerist.com/2017/03/06/4-scams-you-should-always-be-aware-of/)
- [http://www.eapl.org/fakenews](http://www.eapl.org/fakenews)
Avoiding Fake News and Scams

**Recommended Additional Resources:**

**Other technology classes**
Go to [http://www.eapl.org/events](http://www.eapl.org/events) to view and signup for other computer classes. Highlighted class: Technology Safety and Hacking

**Class handouts**
Go to [http://eapl.org/events/computer-programs/class-handouts](http://eapl.org/events/computer-programs/class-handouts) to download handouts and exercises.

**Librarian and computer aide assistance**
We are glad to help you out at the second floor reference desk as best we can while helping others.

**Help appointments**
Ela Library cardholders can schedule one-on-one appointments with librarians for further help. We can help with our Digital Media Labs or with general technology questions in our areas of expertise. Appointments last up to one hour. Paper appointment request forms are available at the 2nd floor reference desk. You can also request appointments online:
- [http://www.eapl.org/DMLhelp](http://www.eapl.org/DMLhelp) to sign up for a Digital Media Lab appointment.

**Tech Tutoring**
The last Wednesday of some months, a tech savvy librarian is available for six 30 minute tech tutoring appointments. Bring a list of questions and we’ll help with as many as possible. Limit one tutoring appointment per month per patron. First registered first served, no library card required. Go to [http://www.eapl.org/events](http://www.eapl.org/events) to register for a session.

**Databases**
Access databases from the library Research page: [http://www.eapl.org/resources](http://www.eapl.org/resources)
- **Gale Courses** offers a wide range of highly interactive, instructor led courses that you can take entirely online. As an Ela Area Public Library card holder in good standing, you are entitled to these courses at no cost. Courses run for six weeks and new session begin every month.
- **Lynda.com** offers technology training with over 20,000 training videos on over 300 topics with exercise files included. The Library pays for card holders in good standing to access this resource, however you will be required to create a free account. *Please remember to log out when you are finished.*

**Books**
The Library has many technology-related books in the 2nd floor non-fiction collection. These books are generally located from call numbers 004 – 007.

**Laptops and iPads**
Check out a laptop or iPad for use in the library for up to 2 hours. More info: [http://eapl.org/laptops](http://eapl.org/laptops)

**Free online tech training websites**