What is Fake?

How to Find Real Facts in a Misleading Online World

Thanks given to Media Smarts - https://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/break-fake-how-tell-whats-true-online

Checking Your Sources - can you spot the fake?

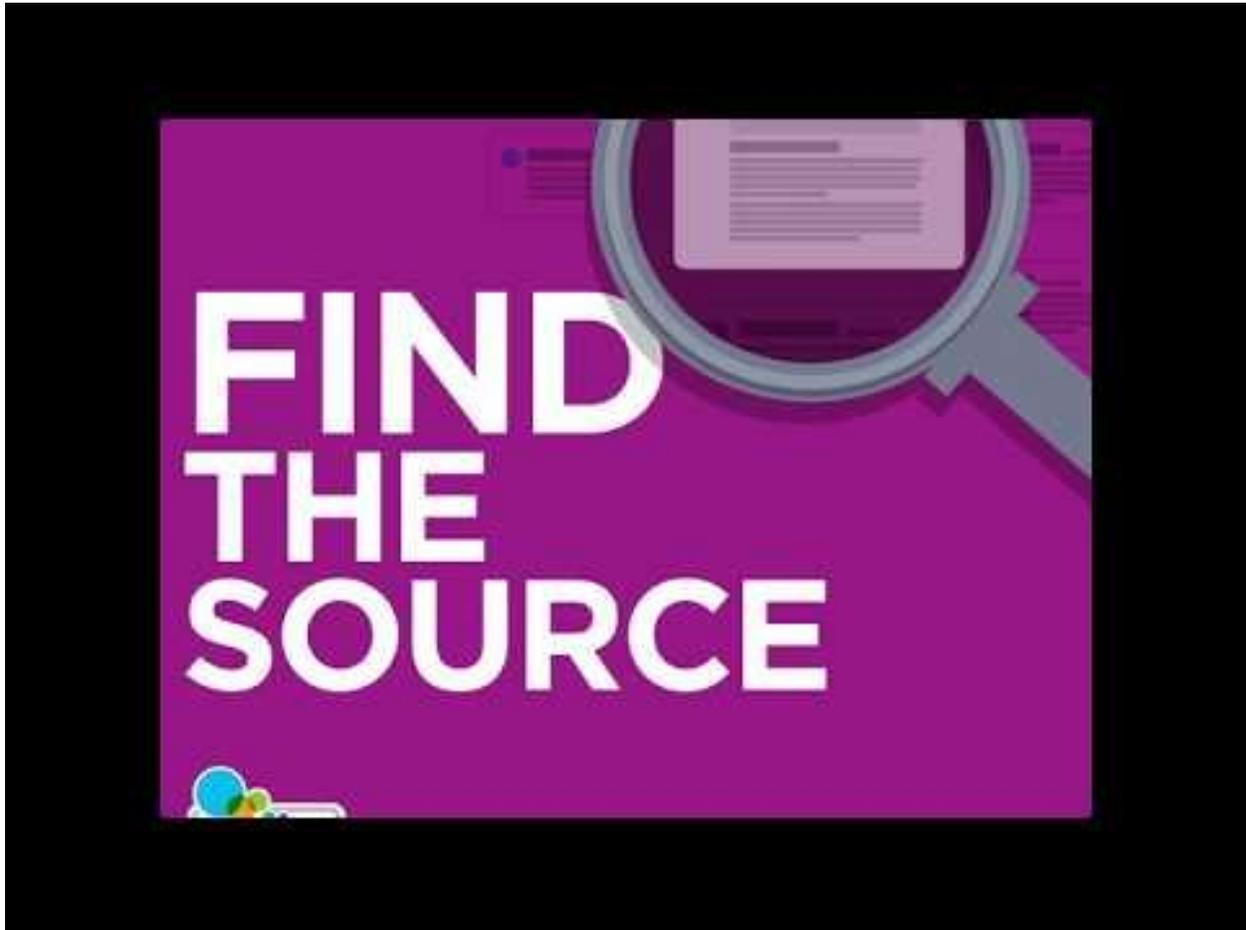https://mediasmarts.ca/quiz/break-fake-news

Step 1 – Use a Fact Checking Link -

Use this link to type in key words from a news story or website and see if it turns up as misleading information - bit.ly/fact-search

If this check does not bring up information, move on to Step 2

Step 2 – Checking the Source

Since it's so easy to copy and share things online, it's important to find out where something originally came from before you decide whether or not to trust it.

- The easiest way to find the source is usually to follow links that will lead you to the original story.
- Use a search engine. See if you can find any information about where the story originally came from and do a search that includes that.

Step 3 – Verifying the Source -

Whether you're looking at a website, a photo or video, or a news story, what really matters is whether or not the people who *originally created* it are trustworthy. You can't always confirm that something is false, but if the source isn't reliable you have no reason to believe it.

To find out if a source is reliable, ask three questions:

1. Do they *really exist*?

"About Us" pages and profiles are easy to fake, so use a search engine or Wikipedia to find out if other people say they really exist. Pay the most attention to things that are hard to fake.
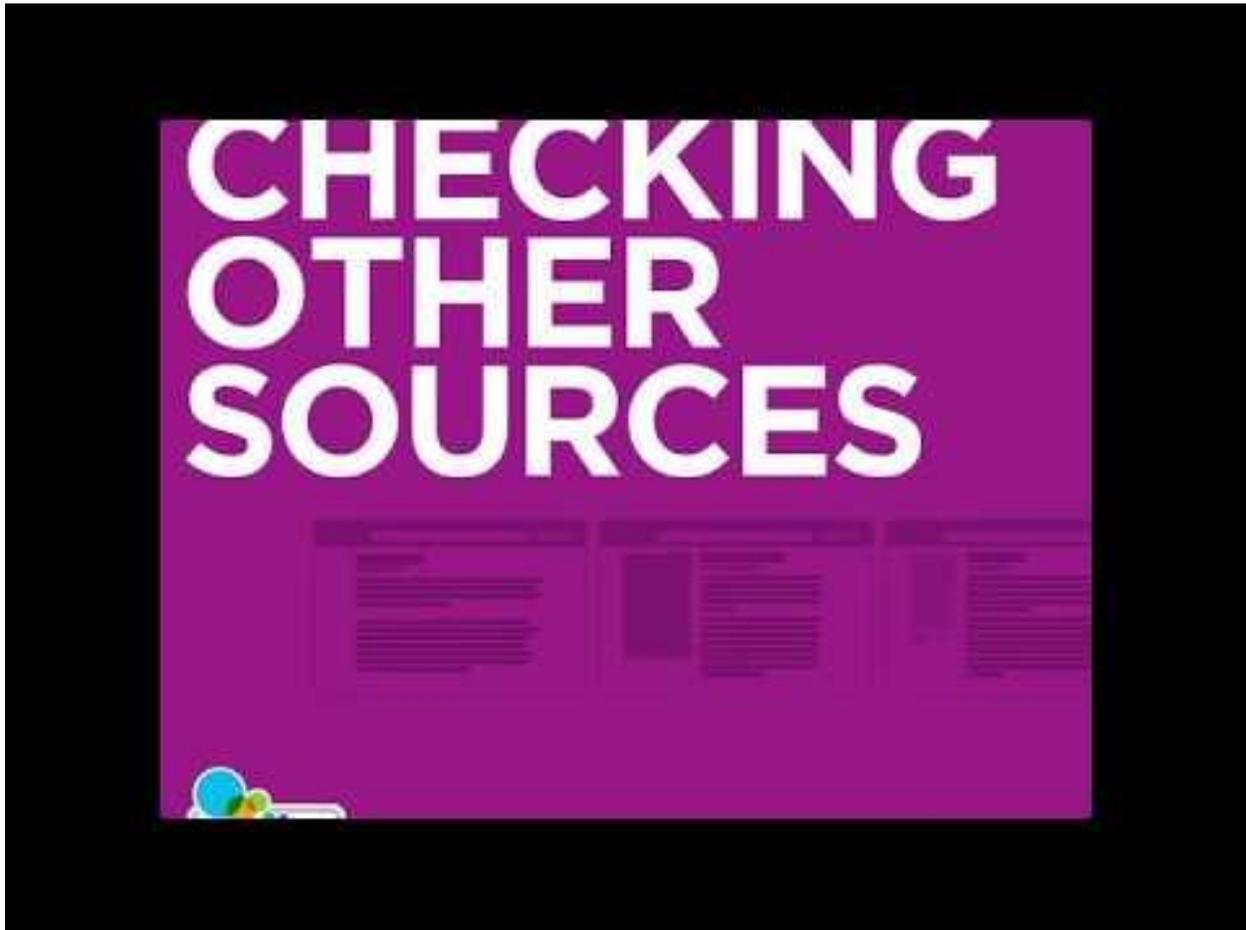
2. Are they *who they say they are*?

It's easy to pretend to be someone else online, so once you know the source really exists, you need to find out if what you're looking at really came from them.

3. Are they *trustworthy*?

For sources of general information, like newspapers, find out if they have a *process* for making sure they're giving you good information, and a good *track record* of doing it.

For more specialized sources, find out whether they're *experts* or *authorities* on that topic. Do a search and make sure that they are an authority in the right field.

Step 4 - Check Other Sources

This step may sometimes be the last one you do, but it could also be the first. It's a quick way of finding out if a source might be biased, or if a news story is true.

- The News tab is better than the main Google search for this step. While not every source that's included is perfectly reliable, they are all news outlets that really exist.
- Our custom news search, bit.ly/news-search, searches ten Canadian and international sources of reliable news.
- You can also use this step to find out whether something fits with what most of the experts on that topic agree – what's called the *consensus* view. Use our custom search bit.ly/science-search to find the consensus on specialist topics like science and medicine

How to Identify Fake News in 10 Steps

Name: _____

Date: _____

Beware fake or misleading news.
Be skeptical. Ask Questions.
Verify.
It's up to you.

ProQuest

➡ **Select "Yes" or "No" to the following questions.**
The more thumbs-down icons you select, the more likely the news article is fake.

1. Do a Visual Assessment

Assess the overall design. Fake news sites often look amateurish, have lots of annoying ads, and use altered or stolen images.

Overall, does the news article and website seem high quality?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2. Identify the News Outlet

The Wall Street Journal and CNN are examples of news outlets. If you haven't heard of the news outlet, search online for more information.

Is the news outlet well known, well respected, and trustworthy?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3. Check the Web Domain

Many fake news URLs look odd or end with ".com.co" or ".lo" (e.g., abcnews.com.co) to mimic legitimate news sites.

Does the URL seem legitimate?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Check the "About Us" Section

Trustworthy news outlets usually include detailed background information, policy statements, and email contacts in the "About/About Us" section.

Does the site provide detailed background information and contacts?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Identify the Author

Fake news articles often don't include author names. If included, search the author's name online to see if he or she is well known and respected.

Does the article have a trusted author?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Identify the Central Message

Read the article carefully. Fake news articles often push one viewpoint, have an angry tone, or make outrageous claims.

Does the article seem fair, balanced, and reasonable?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Assess Spelling, Grammar, and Punctuation

If the article has misspelled words, words in ALL CAPS, poor grammar, or lots of "!!!!," it's probably unreliable.

Does the article have proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. Analyze Sources and Quotes

Consider the article's sources and who is quoted. Fake news articles often cite anonymous sources, unreliable sources, or no sources at all.

Does the article include and identify reliable sources?

☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Find Other Articles

Search the internet for more articles on the same topic. If you can't find any, chances are the story is fake.

Are there multiple articles by other news outlets on this topic?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Turn to Fact Checkers

FactCheck.org, Snopes.com, PolitiFact.com are widely trusted fact-checking websites.

Do the fact checkers say the news story is true?

☐ Yes ☐ No

➡ **Based on your research, do you think the article is more likely to be true or false? Explain.**

Tools to Use:

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bit.ly/fact-search

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News search - bit.ly/news-search

Science search - bit.ly/science-search