10 Ways to Spot a Fake News Article

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Denzel Washington was quoted as saying, "If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed. If you do read the newspaper, you're misinformed." So what should you do? You want to be informed, but a good deal of the information out there is incorrect or biased. Here are some things to keep an eye out for when reading a news article.

1. Is the article missing citations, references, or links?

Links and citations allow us to easily access, read, and explore more about the information found in the article. Authors include references and links to validate their story, so if an article is missing links and references, it is a huge red flag.

Many big name news sites, such as CNN, do not include links or citations, but other sites do. The articles that you read should look similar to this one from LiveScience.com's article, "Why Do We Fall for Fake News?" Check out the hyperlinks throughout the article. They help validate the information that the author wrote about.

2. Is the author's name missing?

An article without an author's name is another red flag. Most authors who put the time in to develop a well-researched news story like having their name attached to it. When an article is missing the name of the individual who wrote it, the reader isn't sure whether it's a trusted journalist who wrote the article or an angry teenager. Only consider trusting articles with an author's name attached to it.

3. If the author's name is listed, are they a trustworthy individual?

Do a Google search on the author's name to find their occupation and locate other articles that the author has composed. Is the author an expert in their field? Have they written other well-researched articles? Do a quick background check on the author to determine their credibility.

4. What can you find in the "About Us" section of the website?

On the top or bottom of most websites, you should see a section titled "About Us." This section should give you a brief run-down of the mission and goals of the site. Do they aspire to post trustworthy news? Do they have an authoritative team of journalists and writers? Or is it a

website that allows the general public to post articles? Reading about the website that hosts the article can help you determine if they post trustworthy sources.

5. Are there spelling or grammatical errors found in the text?

Authors tend to read and re-read their articles numerous times prior to posting. In addition, they often have others proofread their work. When spelling or grammatical errors are present, this shows that the author might have hastily posted the information or they may not be an authoritative expert in the content that they're writing about.

6. Are there any direct quotes that are incorrectly used or taken out of context?

Copy and paste a quote from the article into Google's search bar. Are you able to find that same quote on another website or did your search produce a quote that is a bit different than the one in the article? Writers sometimes modify quotes to change their meaning and to make their content persuade you into believing something that isn't 100% true.

7. Can you find a similar article on the Internet?

Do a simple keyword search on Google for a similar article. If you're unable to find anything remotely similar, chances are that the author didn't do their research, made up much of the information in the article, or are fully sharing their opinion on a topic – not factual news. Stick to trusting news articles that have similar pieces found on the Internet.

8. Does the article only showcase one side of an argument?

News articles are essentially meant to inform you by showing all sides of a topic; the good, the bad, and the ugly. If an article only features one viewpoint, the reader should remind themselves that they're not seeing the full picture. Be cautious of news articles that only report one side of the story.

9. Does the headline not match the content of the article?

A headline can do more than provide a snippet of what the entire piece is about; it can also persuade us to believe something before we even read the article. Authors sometimes fabricate their headlines, knowing that you might walk away without reading the article and believing their claim. If the headline causes your eyes to pop out of your head, read the entire article first before deciding to trust the information or not.

10. Is the story completely outrageous?

If the story is unbelievable, chances are it is! Trust your gut instinct and check for many of items discussed in this article.

How can you prevent the spread of fake news?

If you believe something is incorrect, simply do not share it with others. Sharing fake news articles pushes them higher up in search result pages, causing others to come across them quickly and believing the content.

Some sites, such as Facebook, allow you to flag posts that are harmful or inappropriate. If you believe that a news story is false, make sure to report it to the host so they can take it down if necessary.

We know, it takes time to double check the information in news articles, but be an informed citizen and find out if what you're reading and sharing is factual or not.

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