

Fake News: Identify and Ignore

November 23, 2021



What is fake news?¹

Fake news is a term that means something different to each person. At its core, it is a term used to describe news stories that include fabricated facts, sources, or quotes. Stories could have one aspect of truth to them but are told in a way that is out of context and misleading to readers. For example, a story could include verifiable information but be written in a way that is biased or deliberately contentious.

Types of fake news¹

Misinformation:

False or inaccurate information that is inadvertently spread, but does not intend to deceive readers.

Disinformation:

False information that is deliberately created to obscure the truth and influence public opinion.

Where is fake news posted?¹

Fake content designed to provoke an emotional response in readers is posted on certain websites so that it will be shared. Fake news has spread more rapidly on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter because they are quick and easy to share with a wide audience.

An example of fake news²

According to Snopes.com, in March 2021, an advertisement stating "35 foods that should never be placed in the refrigerator" appeared on websites. The ad showed a picture of eggs with a red "X" through it, which implied that eggs should not be refrigerated. People who clicked on the advertisement were led to a 35-page slideshow article on the *Dr. Health Magazine* website. It listed products that it suggested should not be refrigerated; however, eggs were not part of that list.

When Snopes looked further into the website to determine its credibility, they found that no medical professionals were listed as staff members for *Dr. Health Magazine*.

The Food and Drug Administration in the United States recommends that eggs be kept refrigerated in that country because they are washed at egg-production facilities due to salmonella concerns. Washing them removes a thin cuticle that protects the eggs from bacteria that could get inside. With this cuticle gone, it's important for eggs to remain refrigerated. This article could mislead readers into participating in an unsafe handling of food.

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How to spot fake news³

- Read the "About Us" page on the website. Click away from the site and research the author and website elsewhere on the internet.
- Compare how the website and other trusted news sources report on the same story.
- Consider the supporting sources of information on the website and verify their credibility by using trusted fact checking tools such as FactCheck.org, PolitiFact.com, or Snopes.com

References

1. University of Michigan Library. (2021, October 26). What is "Fake News?" <https://guides.lib.umich.edu/fakenews>
2. Snopes. (2021, March 6). Should US Eggs Not Be Refrigerated? <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/should-eggs-be-refrigerated/>
3. University of Toronto Libraries. How Do I Spot Misinformation? <https://oneseach.library.utoronto.ca/faq/how-do-i-spot-misinformation>

To learn more:



[Spotting Fake News and Using Snopes.com](https://www.snopes.com) is a handy PDF guide with tips and real world screenshots to help you spot fake news. It was created for the Youth Teaching Adults program from ABC Life Literacy www.youthteachingadults.ca



The Toronto Public Library's [How to Spot Fake News page](#) provides advice and resources on navigating the landscape of Internet news.

About CanAge

CanAge is Canada's National Seniors' Advocacy organization.

We are a non-partisan non-profit organization that educates, empowers and mobilizes people on the issues that matter most to older Canadians and their caregivers.

We work to advance the rights and well-being of Canadians as we age in order to live vibrant and connected lives.

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