

### **Twelve Tips for Spotting Fake News**

1. Check the source of the information: is it from a reputable organization, such as a university or news agency? If you do not recognize or know much about the source, try to find out more about it. Scroll down to the bottom of the homepage to find out who the actual publisher is—it may be different in the fine print. In other words, who owns the online thinktank, journal, or agency that is issuing the information? Can you find out more about them?
2. Does the organization publishing the information have vested interests?
3. Be aware that some sites will use URLs that are similar to those of legitimate sites, but perhaps with a minor difference. This is a common technique of scammers.
4. Try to cross-reference the information with known, reputable sources.
5. Check the validity of any evidence offered in support of a claim by cross-referencing for authenticity.
6. How sensationalist is the headline? Does the accompanying article match the headline? Many people simply scroll through headlines—it's all they need to make a judgment. Consider the validity of the “upside-down pyramid” approach to writing news, and the implications of this on the information in question.
7. Is the story well-written (i.e., to Mr. Nigro's standards)? You will sometimes see grammatical and spelling errors in legitimate articles, but bad writing—especially pieces peppered with rhetorical questions, slang, and casual language—often indicates a con job.
8. Check the date, and possibly the time signature, if you can—many legitimate news agencies put out fake news stories just for fun on April 1<sup>st</sup>! But the real issue is: how timely is the information? Sometimes sources pass on assumptions as facts just to get the story out ahead of everyone else.
9. Are the photographs authentic? Could they have been doctored? Particularly damning photos need to be checked.
10. Could the story be a satire, or a joke? Are there disclaimers hiding in the fine print?
11. Does the story sound plausible? If it sounds far-fetched, it usually is.
12. Do you *want* to believe what you are reading? You should be even more careful with stories you want to believe to counteract your own confirmation bias.