



A YOUNG DETECTIVE'S SUPER-QUICK AND HIGHLY USEFUL GUIDE TO INVESTIGATING

FAKE NEWS

You may have heard of this thing called fake news. Well, it's something that is a big problem, but if you get your detective hat on, you can get to the bottom of it.

Here's your super-quick but highly useful guide to understanding what it is and how to bust it.

FAKE NEWS is news that isn't true. It's *false* or *misleading*.

TIME TO TURN ON YOUR FAKE NEWS RADAR, DETECTIVES

First of all, **STOP**. Think. Question everything. Not because it's a big bad world and you can't trust anyone. But because you're a detective, and every fine detective knows it's a good habit to *sense-check* the information you take in. Wondering how to do that? Ask these questions and you'll be sniffing out fake news in no time:

• HANG ON. WHO WROTE THIS, ANYWAY?

Check the **SOURCE**. That's where the story comes from. Where did you find it? On the radio? A newspaper? Is this journalism or is it an advert?

What does this person or organisation believe? What are their values? On websites, look up the 'About Us' section. It might tell you why their stories try to push you in a certain direction.

• WHO PUBLISHED THE STORY? Can you trust them?

There will (hopefully!) be some well-known news companies or official organisations in your country that are considered trustworthy. There are also some specifically designed for young readers. On the flip side, there will be some that are known for ... err ... *STRETCHING* the truth. Maybe this is something you can chat to a grown-up about. Someone like a parent, a teacher or a librarian – librarians know lots about finding the best sources of information.

GOOD DETECTIVES ARE NEVER TOO SHY TO HIT UP THE EXPERTS.

• **HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?** What do you think the person writing it wants you to feel or believe? Fake news stories are often the kind that get people **REALLY** worked up. If a story looks like it's trying to do that, whip out your magnifying glass and give it an extra good look.

• **DID YOU CHECK THE DATE?** Always check the date. Old stories are sometimes recycled and they can be really misleading.

• DID THEY BRING IN THE TOP DOGS? THE EXPERTS?

Does the story quote official sources of info like government sources, the World Health Organisation or the United Nations? Fake news usually won't. It's usually more opinion-flavoured than fact-flavoured.

• **CAN YOU FACTCHECK IT?** Can you find the same story on a really reputable website? (On three websites to be sure.) You can use humans to factcheck too if you happen to know someone who knows a great deal about a subject.

• **HEY, HAS SOMEONE BEEN MESSING ABOUT WITH THOSE PHOTOS?** You might be able to spot a fake photo, but not always. Technology is so advanced now that it's possible to create fake photos or videos of people that look very real. But you can often spot something that isn't quite right. It's magnifying-glass-o'clock again!

• IS THERE SOMETHING FISHY ABOUT THIS WEBSITE?

Check for an official website address (URL) like .gov and .ac or something normal like .com (but remember, anyone can buy a .com). And look out for mistakes in spelling and grammar – journalists on reputable news sites will quadruple-check this sort of thing. Capital letters, bold or underlined text and exclamation marks can be a giveaway too because **REPUTABLE NEWS SOURCES DON'T USE CAPITAL LETTERS, BOLD TEXT, UNDERLINING, AND EXCLAMATION MARKS TO MAKE A POINT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

• **IS THIS SOME KIND OF A JOKE?** No, really. There is a chance the story is *supposed* to be poking fun at things (like an article from The Onion or The Daily Mash or a magazine like *Private Eye*). The whole aim is to be funny or make a statement – not to mislead people. This is satire or parody and it's very different to fake news. But sometimes this can even go wrong. That's what happened with The Great Moon Hoax. In 1835, the *New York Sun* printed a bunch of articles about life on the moon (with pictures and everything!). It had things like mini-zebras, unicorns and people with bat-wings. This was intended to be a satire, but the general public actually believed it! This made-up story was hugely popular and was reprinted around the world.

• **FINALLY, WHAT DOES YOUR GUT SAY?** Does the headline and story sound and feel believable? If it's really shocking or outrageous, it might not be true.

That last one's important. You've got your gut. If a story stinks ... it's *probably* fake. At the very least, it's a call to **STOP** and **THINK** and look up multiple alternative trustworthy sources.

“PERSON CHECKS IN ON AND CHEERS UP ELDERLY NEIGHBOUR”

“KIDS ARE CLEVERER THAN EVER”



GOT ALL THAT?

I know it might feel like a lot to think about, but you don't have to do it all by yourself. When you see a piece of news that raises your eyebrows, it's always worth having a chat with friends, family or teachers. Detectives don't work alone, you know.