



When reading the news, consider the source

Not that long ago people got news from a local newspaper or radio station or from a national television network, and it was easier to know the reliability of the source.

Today, anyone can spread news stories quickly and easily by posting on social media or forwarding an email. Each person who reads that post or email can forward it to friends, family and co-workers. In no time, a story can circulate to millions of people.

But not all stories that appear to be “news” are true. Some stories are made up.

Others are partially true, but with important facts omitted or changed.

What can you do?

How can we tell whether a news story is true, partially true or entirely false? First, consider the source. Is it a well-known, reputable newspaper, TV news broadcaster, or internet news site? Some false news sources use names that sound like legitimate newspapers or TV stations. Others use the name of a legitimate news source, but have a different web address.

Check the website of any questionable news source. Does the site link to other reputable sources?

Some websites clearly state that its articles are meant to be satire. Without careful reading, these can appear to be actual news.

Visit national news sites and other sources you know to be reliable to see if they report the same or a similar story. A breaking news story should appear in other newspapers and internet news sites. Does your local or regional newspaper mention this story?

Research the author if you do not know from reliable sources that this person provides trustworthy



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information. Do other, reputable websites mention the author? Does the author’s work appear in reliable publications?

If the author has a website, does the information about the author’s qualifications on that site indicate he or she is likely to be knowledgeable on the subject?

Does the news story cite any research or outside sources to support the opinion or information in the article? If so, look for independent confirmation on the internet that the research exists and says what the author reports.

What is the date on the article? Sometimes old news is recycled to make it appear to be something happening now. There are websites that check the accuracy of news articles and internet rumors.

One of the oldest internet fact checking sites is *snopes.com*. Others are *factcheck.org* and *politifact.com*.

It is tempting to share unbelievably good news or warn others of an imminent threat. But before you spread news that seems too good to be true or too awful to believe, check it out first.