



Research Guides

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/ What is "Fake News"?

"Fake News," Lies and Propaganda: How to Sort Fact from Fiction

What is "Fake News"?

Why is this important?

Where do news sources fall on the political bias spectrum?

How do you recognize bias in yourself and the media?

How can you read, listen, and/or share news?

What can I do about "fake news"?

What is "Fake News"?

"Fake news" is a term that has come to mean different things to different people. At its core, **we are defining "fake news" as those news stories that are false: the story itself is fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes.** Sometimes these stories may be propaganda that is intentionally designed to mislead the reader, or may be designed as "clickbait" written for economic incentives (the writer profits on the number of people who click on the story). In recent years, fake news stories have proliferated via social media, in part because they are so easily and quickly shared online.

Misinformation and Disinformation (other types of "fake news")

The universe of "fake news" is much larger than simply false news stories. Some stories may have a nugget of truth, but lack any contextualizing details. They may not include any verifiable facts or sources. Some stories may include basic verifiable facts, but are written using language that is deliberately inflammatory, leaves out pertinent details or only presents one viewpoint. "Fake news" exists within a larger ecosystem of **mis- and disinformation.**

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information that is mistakenly or



about fake news?"

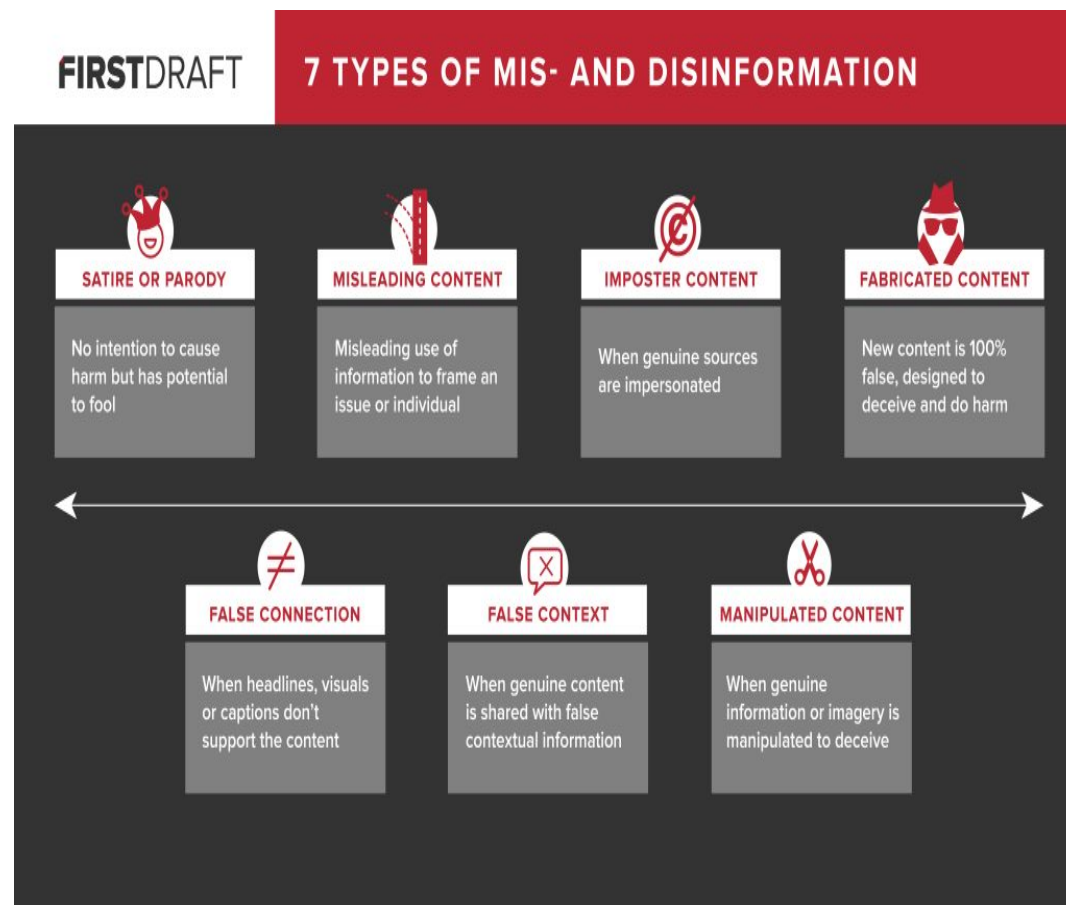
- Think critically. Use the strategies on these pages to evaluate the likely accuracy of information.
- Think twice. If you have any doubt, **do NOT share the information.**

Guide Authors

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inadvertently created or spread; the intent is not to deceive. Disinformation is false information that is deliberately created and spread "in order to influence public opinion or obscure the truth" (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disinformation>).

Claire Wardle of FirstDraftNews.com has created the helpful visual image below to help us think about the ecosystem of mis- and disinformation. And as she points out, "it's complicated."



Where does it come from?

How misinformation and disinformation is produced is directly related to who the author(s) is and the different reasons why it is created.

Who are the authors? They may be:

- Someone wanting to make money, regardless of the content of the article (for example, Macedonian teenagers)
- Satirists who want to either make a point or entertain you, or both
- Poor or untrained journalists - the pressure of the 24 hour news cycle as well as the explosion of news sites may contribute to shoddy writing that doesn't follow professional journalistic standards or ethics
- Partisans who want to influence political beliefs and policy makers

The **technological ease** of copying, pasting, clicking and sharing content online has helped these types of articles to proliferate. In some cases, the articles are designed to provoke an emotional response and placed on certain sites ("seeded") in order to entice readers into sharing them widely. In other cases, "fake news" articles may be generated and disseminated by "bots" - computer algorithms that are designed to act like people sharing information, but can do so quickly and automatically.



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