

YOUTH  
TRAINING  
MODULE

# Really! Is it true?

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COMBATting  
FAKE NEWS

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TRAINING  
MODULE

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• IHR HILFSWERK

**Really! Is it True?  
Combatting Fake News**

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Information is a tool  
to build a lot of beautiful things.  
Misinformation can destroy everything.

Be alert and keep others too.



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# FAKE NEWS AND IT'S IMPACT

## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Understanding the concept of Fake News
- ▶ Understanding the impact of Fake News

## 1. WHAT IS FAKE NEWS

Fake news is a term used to describe false or misleading information that is presented as if it were real news. This false information can be created for various purposes. The proliferation of fake news has become a major concern in recent years, as it can have a significant impact on people.

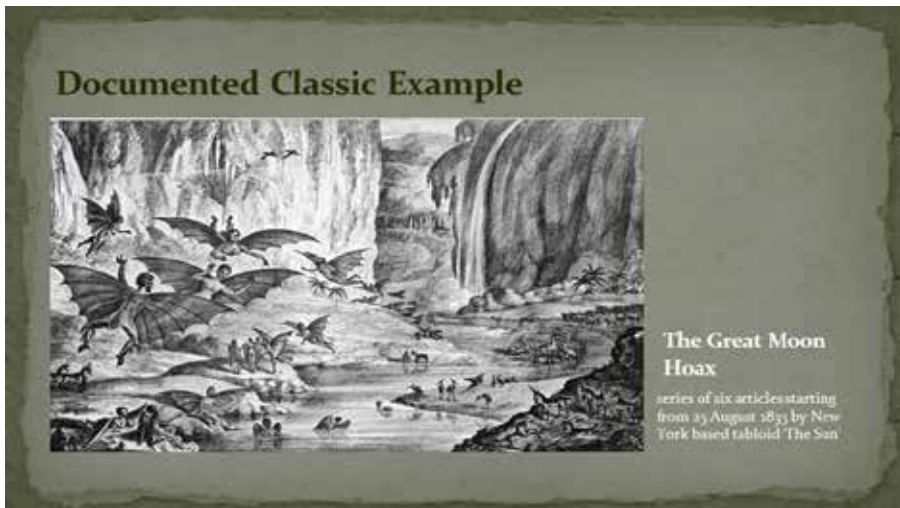


In the digital age where information can be easily spread and shared through social media and other online platforms, the ease of sharing and the lack of fact-checking has made it easier for false information to spread rapidly and widely, which can lead to serious consequences.

One of the biggest challenges with fake news is that it can be difficult to distinguish from real news, and can often appear to be credible to the average reader. This is compounded by the fact that many people tend to believe information that aligns with their existing beliefs and biases, which can make it difficult to correct misinformation once it has spread.

## 2. HISTORY OF FAKE NEWS

False news has always been spread throughout history, but the first documented use of the term 'Fake News' occurred in the 1890s when sensational reports in newspapers were common. There are several examples of fake news in the history.



The most epic documented classic example of fake news is The Great Moon Hoax of 1835. New York based tabloid 'The Sun' published a series of six articles starting from 25th August 1835 depicting the life on the moon. Some other classic examples of fake news in the history are - Lisbon earthquake of 1755, racist news stories in 1800s, news stories before & during the Spanish-American War of 1898, stories by Nazi Propaganda, and stories from the era of 'yellow journalism'.

## Other Classic Example

- \* Nazi Propaganda
- \* Catholic church's false explanation of the 1755 Lisbon earthquake.
- \* In 1800s racist sentiment led to the publication of false stories about African Americans' supposed deficiencies and crimes.
- \* In 1890s Hearst Communication spread sensationalism and reporting rumours as though they were facts.
- \* Yellow Journalism – incredulous news led US into Spanish-American war of 1898.

After the rise of 'Yellow Journalism' public demanded more objective and reliable news sources. In 20<sup>th</sup> century other news agencies filled the space globally.

### 3. IMPACT OF FAKE NEWS

Fake news can have a significant impact on people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors and it can have a significant impact on society by influencing public opinion, undermining trust in the institutions, and even impacting political elections. The spread of fake news can also lead to social unrest, conflict, and even violence in some cases.

#### Impact

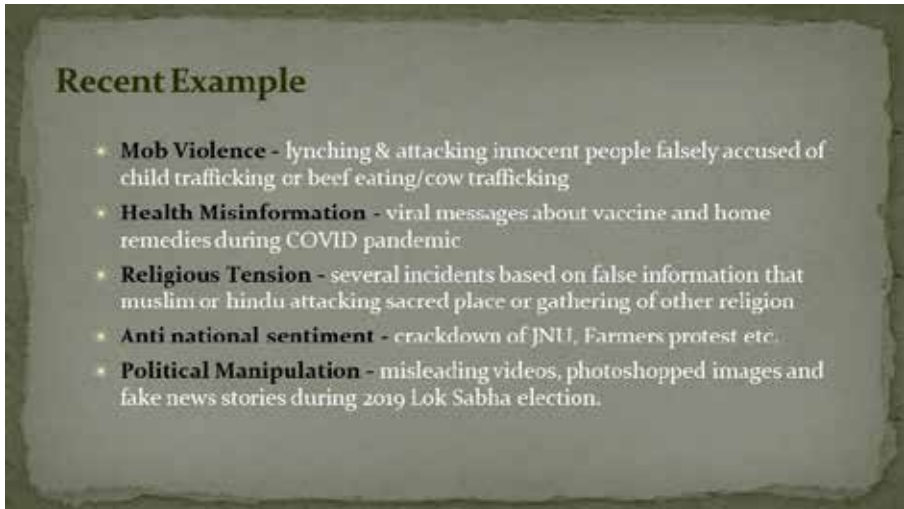
- \* Belief
- \* Attitude
- \* Behavior

The impact of fake news on society is far-reaching and multifaceted.

#### Result

- \* Biased public opinion
- \* Mistrust
- \* Social unrest
- \* Conflict
- \* Violence

The impact of fake news on society is far-reaching and multifaceted. We can see that impact through some recent incidents happened in our country, where freedom of expression, communal harmony and peace, and well being of the people were at the stake and many people died because of fake news.



#### 4. CHANGES IN MODERN TIME

There is an old saying that ‘a lie can go halfway around the world before truth can put it’s boots on’, and it was before the internet was invented. so the problem of fake news has been with us from the centuries. But, the modern digital technology dramatically increases the dangers of disinformation.

Beyond the similar features of yellow journalism such as exaggerated news with shocking headlines to get attention, manipulation of opinion, creating mistrust through the misinformation, gossip and novelty, the modern days fake news has some additional features such as anonymity, speed, and ease of sharability which makes it’s impact more severe.

The technology is improving everyday so to combat with fake news it’s also important to know about the use of technology in modern days fake news, such as bots, artificial intelligence etc.

## Chapter 2

# UNDERSTANDING FAKE NEWS

### Learning Objectives

- ▶ Different types of fake news
- ▶ Psychological factors and filter bubbles
- ▶ Sources of fake news

### 1. TYPES OF FAKE NEWS

Fake news can take many different forms, and understanding the different types can help individuals to better recognize and combat it. Here are some of the most common types of fake news:

#### Fabricated news/Hoax:



This type of fake news is completely made up and has no basis in fact. A hoax is a deliberately fabricated falsehood that is intended to deceive or mislead people. A hoax is created with the specific purpose of tricking people and it can take many forms, including fake stories, images, and

videos, as well as fake social media accounts and websites. The aim of a hoax can vary, from creating a sense of panic or outrage to promoting a particular political agenda or personal gain.

## Misleading Headlines/Clickbaits



Sometimes, a news article may have a misleading or sensationalist headline that does not accurately reflect the content of the article. This can be a form of clickbait and may be designed to attract readers to a website or social media post.

## Propaganda & Conspiracy Theories

Propaganda is false or misleading information that is spread for political purposes. It may be designed to promote a particular political agenda or to sway public opinion on a specific issue.

Conspiracy theories are often based on little or no evidence and involve the idea that there is a secret or hidden agenda behind a particular event or situation. They may be designed to promote a particular worldview or to discredit a particular individual or group

# Propaganda & Conspiracy Theories

Stories that are created to deliberately mislead audiences.

To promote –

- \* A biased point of view
- \* Particular political cause
- \* Agenda



## COVID-19 as population control

The vaccine implants a microchip used to track people; the fatality rate has been wildly inflated; oh, and Bill Gates is not only responsible for the virus but also the head of a plot to use the virus as population control.

# Out of Context Information

## Out of Context Information

False impression of actual event. Distort the real story/message.



Sometimes, real news stories may be shared out of context, which can give a false impression of what is happening. For example, a video clip may be edited to show only a small part of an event, which can distort the overall picture

## Satirical News/Articles



**Satire/Parody**  
Humorous take on current events  
Misunderstood as real news

Satirical news articles are designed to be humorous and are not intended to be taken seriously. However, some people may not realize that the articles are satirical and may share them as real news.

## Sloppy/Biased Journalism



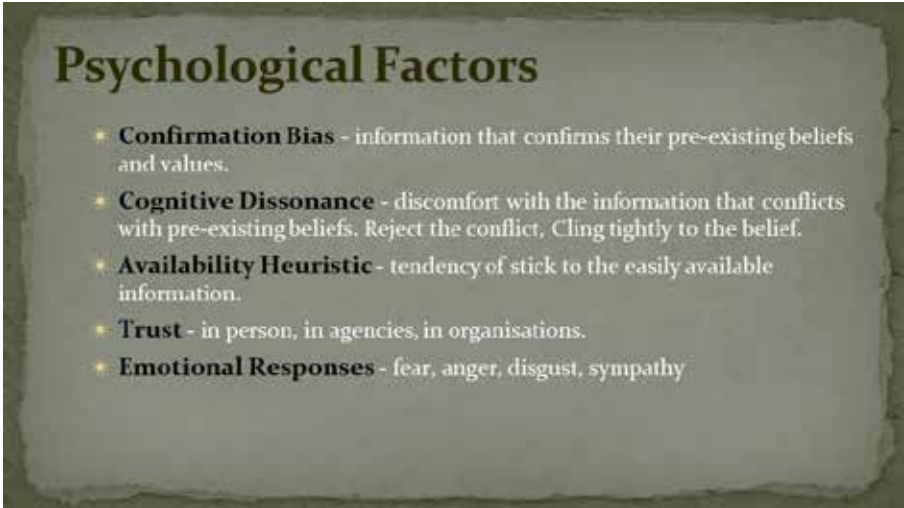
**Sloppy/Biased Journalism**  
Stories with unreliable information or without checking all the facts  
which can mislead audience, or  
Stories with a biased mindset to enforce a particular point of view.

News stories which is written and presented with unreliable information or without checking all the facts which can mislead the audience or stories with a biased mindset to enforce a particular point of view are also considered as fake news.



## 2. PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

There are several psychological factors that can make people susceptible to fake news. Here are some of the most common ones:



### Confirmation Bias

People tend to seek out information that confirms their pre-existing beliefs and values, while discounting information that contradicts them. This can make it easier for fake news to spread, as people may be more likely to believe stories that align with their worldview.

### Cognitive Dissonance

When people encounter information that conflicts with their beliefs, it can create a sense of discomfort known as cognitive dissonance. To reduce this discomfort, people may reject the conflicting information and cling even more tightly to their existing beliefs.

### Availability Heuristic

People tend to overestimate the prevalence of information that is readily available to them. This can make them more susceptible to fake news, as stories that are widely shared on social media or other platforms may be perceived as more common than they actually are.

## Trust in Authority & People

People may be more likely to believe information that comes from sources they perceive as authoritative, such as government agencies or news organizations or from the people whom they believe as a knowledgeable or trustworthy person. This trust can be exploited by those who spread fake news under the guise of being trustworthy sources.

## Emotional Responses

Fake news stories are often designed to elicit strong emotional responses, such as fear, anger, or disgust. When people are in a heightened emotional state, they may be more susceptible to believing false information.

### 3. FILTER BUBBLES



Filter bubbles are a phenomenon in which people are exposed only to information that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs and values, while being shielded from opposing viewpoints. This is often a result of algorithmic filtering, where search engines, social media platforms, and other online services use data about a person's preferences, behaviors, and demographics to tailor the content they see.

Filter bubbles can create an echo chamber effect, where people are exposed only to viewpoints that align with their own, reinforcing their

existing beliefs and making it harder to consider alternative perspectives. This can lead to a narrow and distorted view of the world, and can make it harder to engage in productive dialogue and compromise.

Filter bubbles can also contribute to the spread of fake news and misinformation, as people may be more likely to believe and share information that confirms their existing beliefs, without critically evaluating its accuracy or credibility.

#### 4. SOURCES OF FAKE NEWS

Most of the time people doesn't know that who is the creator of the information they recieved, especially on socil media platforms. They recognise only the imidiata source from where they took it.

From the creation to dissemination of fake news there are several sources, sauch as -



#### Social Media

Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram have become breeding grounds for fake news due to their massive user bases and the ease of sharing information. Fake news can quickly go viral, reaching a wide audience before it can be fact-checked.

## **Websites and Blogs**

There are numerous websites and blogs (including news portals) that prioritize sensationalism over factual reporting. These outlets often lack journalistic integrity and publish misleading or false stories to generate traffic and ad revenue.

Websites like The Onion, The Unreal Times or many other websites produce satirical content that is meant to be humorous and fictional. However, these articles can sometimes be misinterpreted or shared out of context, leading to misinformation.

Search Engines and other aggregators collect information from various sources using artificial intelligence. This process is mainly based on keywords rather than accuracy of content. This leads to a chance of getting misinformation provided by a user of the internet. For example a Wikipedia page created or updated by a misinformed user.

## **Tools of Political Manipulation**

Politicians and political organizations may intentionally spread fake news to discredit their opponents or shape public opinion. This can involve the speeches in public gathering, creation of misleading memes, videos, mass mail or articles tailored to support a particular agenda. As it happened in the history and in recent years mainstream media can be a part of it.

## **Misinformed Individuals**

People who are misinformed or lack media literacy skills may unknowingly share false information, contributing to the spread of fake news. They may share content based on personal biases or emotions without verifying its accuracy with their friends, relatives, or on their social media handles.

# IDENTIFYING AND FACT-CHECKING

## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Key characteristics of fake news
- ▶ Fact-checking techniques and tools

## 1. KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Fake news can be difficult to identify, as it often takes on the appearance of legitimate news. However, there are several key characteristics that can help distinguish fake news from genuine news:



### False information

The most obvious characteristic of fake news is that it contains false information, which may be entirely made up or distorted from the truth.

### Sensational or emotive language

Fake news often uses sensational or emotive language to grab people's attention and encourage them to share the story.

### **Clickbait headlines**

Fake news stories often use clickbait headlines, designed to attract clicks and generate advertising revenue.

### **Lack of credible sources**

Fake news stories often lack credible sources, or may rely on anonymous or unverified sources.

### **Confirmation bias**

Fake news stories often confirm existing biases or beliefs, making them more appealing to certain audiences.

### **Poor grammar or spelling**

Fake news stories may contain grammatical or spelling errors, suggesting that they have not been carefully researched or edited.

### **Inconsistent details**

Fake news stories may contain inconsistencies or logical gaps, which would not be present in genuine news stories.

By being aware of these key characteristics, we can be more vigilant in identifying fake news and taking steps to prevent its spread.

## **2. FACT-CHECKING TECHNIQUES**

It is important to verify information before sharing it. Fact-checking techniques and tools are essential for verifying news stories, images, and videos to prevent the spread of fake news. Here are some effective techniques for fact-checking -

### **Read the article or watch the video in full**

Start by reading the article or watching the video in full to get a clear understanding of its content and context.

### **Identify the source**

Check the source of the article or video to determine its credibility. Look for a reputable news organization or website. Be wary of sources that are unfamiliar or have a history of publishing fake news. Verify the credibility



of the source by checking the domain name and conducting a quick online search to determine whether the source is reputable.

### Check the date

Check the date of the article or video to ensure it is current. Old stories or videos can be repackaged as new and spread as fake news.

### Check for misleading language

Be wary of misleading language or sensational headlines that may be used to grab attention and manipulate the reader.

### Check the information

Use a search engine to see if other news outlets have reported on the same story. If no other reputable sources have reported on the story, it may be fake news. Cross-check any information provided in the article or video. Use reputable sources to verify facts, statistics, and quotes.

### Check the author's credentials

Check the author's background and credentials to ensure they are a reputable source. Be wary of authors who are not experts in the field they are writing about.

### Verify images and videos

If an image or video is included in the article, verify its authenticity. You

can also use verification tools to check if a image/video has been edited or manipulated.

### Check for bias

Look for any bias in the article or video. Be wary of sensationalized language or stories that seem too good or bad to be true.

### Check for corrections or retractions

Check if the news outlet has issued any corrections or retractions for the story. If they have, it may indicate that the story is not credible.

### Share responsibly

Once you have verified the story, share it responsibly. Be cautious of sharing stories on social media without first verifying their authenticity.

In conclusion, fact-checking news stories, images, and videos is an essential skill to combat fake news. By following these steps, you can ensure that the information you are sharing is accurate and credible.

## 3. FACT-CHECKING TOOLS

Fact-checking tools are resources and technologies designed to verify the accuracy and truthfulness of information. These tools help to identify and debunk false or misleading claims, ensuring that accurate information is disseminated to the public. Some common types of fact-checking tools include-





## Reverse image search

To verify the authenticity of images and videos, use reverse image search tools such as Google Images, TinEye or Yandex Images. Simply upload the image or paste the image URL into the search bar, and the tool will provide results of where the image has been used online.

## Video verification tools

Video verification tools such as InVID and Amnesty International's Citizen Evidence Lab can be used to verify the authenticity of videos. These tools provide detailed explanations and evidence to support their video verification.



## Search Engines

Popular search engines like Google have features such as Factcheck Explorer (<https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer>) that allow users to quickly fact-check claims by searching for reliable sources or checking for contradicting information.

## Fact-Checking Websites & Database

There are dedicated websites and networks that specialize in verifying the accuracy of claims made in news articles, social media posts, and other sources. They provide detailed analyses and references to support their conclusions. some of the dedicated factcheckers are -

India -

- [www.altnews.in](http://www.altnews.in)
- [www.thelogicalindian.com](http://www.thelogicalindian.com)
- [www.factchecker.in](http://www.factchecker.in)
- [www.boomlive.in](http://www.boomlive.in)
- [www.fachcheck.afp.com/afp-india](http://www.fachcheck.afp.com/afp-india)
- [www.factly.com](http://www.factly.com)
- [www.smhoaxslayer.com](http://www.smhoaxslayer.com)

International -

- [www.factcheck.afp.com](http://www.factcheck.afp.com)
- [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com)
- [www.politifact.com](http://www.politifact.com)
- [www.factcheck.org](http://www.factcheck.org)

As there are many other fact-checking websites available on the internet, it is important to verify that they are credible or not. IFCN (International Fact-Checking Network) provides a database of IFCN accredited fact-checking organisations around the world.

### **Browser Extensions and Plug-ins**

These tools (TrustedNews, Stopaganda Plus, Check, FakerFact etc.) can be added to web browsers to help users identify fake news or misleading content. They often provide real-time warnings or indicators when visiting websites known for spreading misinformation.

### **Social Media Fact-Checking**

Social media platforms have implemented fact-checking programs that work with independent organizations to assess the accuracy of content shared on their platforms. Warning labels or flags are added to posts that have been identified as false or misleading.

## Chapter 4

# COMBATTING FAKE NEWS

### Learning Objectives

- ▶ Importance of media literacy and critical thinking
- ▶ Role of organisations and Individuals

## 1. PROMOTION OF MEDIA LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING

Promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills is essential in today's world where we are bombarded with an overwhelming amount of information from multiple sources. Here are some reasons why promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills is important -



### Prevention of fake news

Media literacy and critical thinking skills enable individuals to distinguish between fact and fiction, and to identify fake news. This is essential in preventing the spread of fake news, which can have serious consequences. By verifying facts and debunking false claims, you can contribute to a

more reliable and trustworthy information ecosystem.

### **Protection from manipulation**

Media literacy and critical thinking skills help individuals to identify biases and propaganda, and to protect themselves from being manipulated by the media or other sources of information.

### **Improved decision-making**

Media literacy and critical thinking skills enable individuals to analyze information and make informed decisions based on evidence rather than emotional responses or preconceived ideas. Critical thinking helps protect individuals and societies from making decisions based on false or misleading information. Whether it's about health, politics, science, or any other topic, accurate information is vital for making informed choices that align with reality.

### **Enhanced communication skills**

Media literacy and critical thinking skills enable individuals to communicate more effectively and accurately, and to express their opinions in a clear and concise manner.

### **Advancement of democracy**

Media literacy and critical thinking skills are essential for the functioning of a healthy democracy. An informed and educated citizenry is necessary for a democracy to thrive, and media literacy and critical thinking skills enable individuals to participate effectively in the democratic process.

Promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills should be a priority for educators, policymakers, and individuals alike. By developing these skills, we can create a more informed and engaged society, and prevent the spread of fake news and propaganda.

## **2. ROLE OF JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS**

Journalists and media organizations play a crucial role in combatting fake news. Here are some ways in which they can contribute -



## **Fact-checking**

Journalists and media organizations can fact-check news stories and information to verify their accuracy. This can involve using various tools and techniques, such as reverse image search, video verification, and fact-checking websites.

## **Promoting media literacy**

Journalists and media organizations can educate the public on media literacy and critical thinking skills. This can involve creating educational resources, such as articles, videos, and infographics, that teach people how to identify and avoid fake news.

## **Holding themselves accountable**

Journalists and media organizations should hold themselves accountable for their reporting and take responsibility for any mistakes or inaccuracies. They should issue corrections and retractions when necessary, and be transparent about their sources and methods.

## **Resisting sensationalism**

Journalists and media organizations should resist the temptation to prioritize clicks and views over accuracy and truth. They should avoid sensational headlines and stories, and focus on providing accurate and reliable information to their audiences.

## **Collaborating with fact-checkers**

Journalists and media organizations can collaborate with fact-checkers and other organizations that are dedicated to combatting fake news. This can involve sharing resources, working together on fact-checking initiatives, and promoting each other's work.

### **3. ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS**

Individuals also play a critical role in combatting fake news. They have a responsibility to themselves and their communities to be informed and responsible consumers of information, and by fulfilling this responsibility, they can help to create a more informed and engaged society. By taking some steps, individuals can help to combat fake news and promote accurate and reliable information.

Here are some ways in which individuals can contribute -



#### **Develop media literacy skills**

Individuals can educate themselves on media literacy and critical thinking skills. This can involve reading articles and watching videos that explain how to identify fake news, and taking courses or attending workshops on media literacy.

## **Verify information**

Individuals should verify information before sharing it on social media or other platforms. This can involve fact-checking the information using online tools or consulting reliable sources.

## **Be skeptical & practice the techniques**

It is important to question information, verify sources, and evaluate evidence. Individuals should be skeptical of information that seems too good (or too bad) to be true. They should question the source of the information and check if other reputable sources are reporting the same information. They should practice fact-checking and verification techniques to enhance the skills required to combat the fake news.

## **Check the source**

Individuals should check the source of the information before sharing it. They should verify if the source is reputable, and if the information has been verified by other credible sources.

## **Share accurate information**

Individuals should make an effort to share accurate and reliable information. They should be mindful of the potential consequences of sharing false or misleading information, and take responsibility for the accuracy of the information they share.

## **Report fake news**

After spotting a fake news Individuals should report the authority to take action on that news. They should inform and aware others too that the said information is fake.

## Chapter 5

# EXERCISES TO PRACTICE FACT-CHECKING AND VERIFICATION TECHNIQUES

### Learning Objective

- ▶ Improving fact-checking and verification skills

Practicing fact-checking and verification techniques has the potential to combat misinformation, promote critical thinking, protect decision-making processes, strengthen media literacy, foster trust, and contribute to a more informed and accountable society.

Here are some exercises to practice fact-checking and verification techniques -



### Analyze news stories

Read news stories and try to spot fake news. Analyze news stories from different sources and try to identify bias, propaganda. Analyze the language, tone, and sources of the information to determine whether it



is fake. Use fact-checking websites and tools to verify the accuracy of the news stories.

### **Image verification**

Search for images online and use reverse image search tools to verify their authenticity. Analyze the images and try to identify if they have been edited or manipulated.

### **Video verification**

Search for videos online and use video verification tools to verify their authenticity. Analyze the videos and try to identify if they have been edited or manipulated.

### **Evaluate sources**

Evaluate the credibility of different sources of information. Analyze the website, author, and date of the information to determine whether it is reliable.

### **Fact-checking role play**

Conduct a role play exercise where one person presents a news story, and the other person has to fact-check and verify the accuracy of the story.

By practicing these exercises, you can improve your fact-checking and verification skills, and become more adept at identifying fake news.

## FURTHER READINGS

- A Citizen's guide to Fake News 2.0  
<https://www.cits.ucsb.edu/fake-news>
- A brief history of fake news  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zwcgn9q>
- 7 Biggest Fake News Stories in History (And What We Can Learn From Them)  
<https://www.alittlebithuman.com/7-biggest-fake-news-stories-in-history-and-what-we-can-learn-from-them/>
- Fake News: What is it and how to spot it?  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/38906931>
- How do you recognize bias in yourself and the media  
<https://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=637508&p=4484724>
- The Problem of Fake News in India: Issues, Concerns and Regulation  
<https://www.drishtiiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-editorials/the-problem-of-fake-news-in-india-issues-concerns-and-regulation>
- Fact Checking & Investigative Journalism Tools  
<https://www.publicmediaalliance.org/tools/fact-checking-investigative-journalism/>
- Google Fact Check Tools  
<https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/about>
- International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)  
<https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/>
- IFCN code of principles  
<https://ifcncodeofprinciples.poynter.org/>

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Public Advocacy Initiatives for Rights and Values in India (PAIRVI) is a capacity building and advocacy support organization working at the intersections of rights, development and sustainability. It works with small grassroots organizations and community based groups to enhance their understanding on development discourse and capacity to respond appropriately.

PAIRVI also works with a pan Indian coalition on climate and environmental justice, MAUSAM (Movement for Advancing Understanding on Sustainability and Mutuality), previously Beyond Copenhagen.

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**Contact:** [pairvidelhi1@gmail.com](mailto:pairvidelhi1@gmail.com), [info@pairvi.org](mailto:info@pairvi.org)