

HOW TO NAVIGATE



FALSE INFORMATION

Technology keeps evolving, and so does the spread of false information. It can feel overwhelming trying to figure out what's true or false – online or offline. By using a few simple strategies, you can build your confidence and sharpen your critical thinking.

WHAT IS MISINFORMATION?

Misinformation is a false or misleading post, statement, or claim – whether shared by accident or not – that leads to the wrong idea.

Disinformation is the same but is **known to be false** and is spread for a political or social effect.

You've probably heard the term "**Fake News.**" It usually refers to false information made to look like real news. Though it feels modern, the term goes back to 1890 in a Cincinnati newspaper.

THREE WAYS FALSE INFORMATION AFFECTS US:

1. **It creates confusion about who and what to trust**

We start doubting who or what to trust. For example, fake claims or AI-generated images can leave us unsure of what's real. As philosopher Michael P. Lynch said: "Propagandists... just have to get you confused enough so that you don't know what is true".

2. **It leads to immediate reactions**

False information can cause immediate misunderstandings based on **a false factual understanding** – whether that is turning left when we should turn right, deciding whether to take or reject a medication or deciding whether to employ someone falsely accused of wrongdoing.

3. **It shapes our attitudes to the world over time**

If we hear something false enough times, it can slowly shape our views and influence how we act.

WHY DO WE FALL FOR IT?

1. **It seems plausible**

If something sounds like it could be true – especially if it fits our expectations – we're more likely to believe it.

2. **We don't pause and think**

When content makes us laugh, angry or scared, we're less likely to stop and think. We share it without checking.

3. **We've heard it before**

Repetition makes false claims seem more familiar – and more believable – even if we doubted them at first.

THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO AVOID BEING FOOLED

1. Check the source

Where did the claim come from? A trusted news outlet? A random screenshot on WhatsApp? Just like you'd want to know what's in your food, know what's in your information.

- Can you trace it back to a real person or organisation?
- Are they qualified to talk about the topic?
- Is there proof or evidence? As maths teachers ask: have they shown their working out?

2. See what other trusted sources say

If the claim is true, reliable outlets are likely to report it too. Look for confirmation from fact-based, trustworthy sources – especially those with different points of view.

3. Think before acting

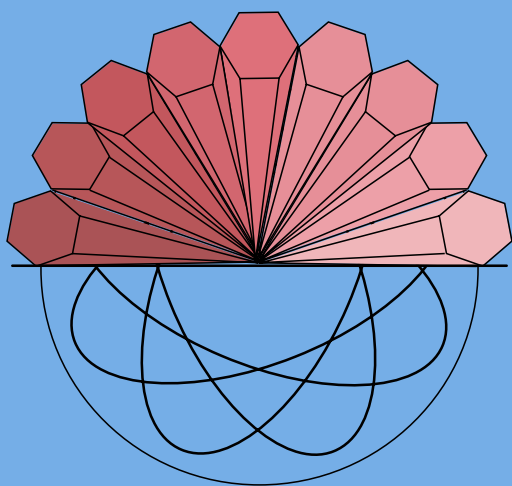
If you're unsure a claim is true, ask: *What could happen if I share or act on this and it turns out to be false?* False claims can ruin reputations, cause harm, and spread fear. Take a pause before sharing.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Don't react on instinct – pause, think and check.
- Use credible search engines to compare what different reliable sources are saying.
- Check with fact-checkers like **Full Fact**, **FactCheckNI** or **BBC Verify**. These groups follow strict rules on accuracy and transparency – and correct their mistakes when needed.

Want to learn more? Try free online tools and courses from **AFP**, **Africa Check**, and **TinEye** among others.

When you come across information – especially online – don't rush to believe or share it. **Pause, ask questions and use reliable tools.** That's how you get closer to the truth when it really counts.



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