

What is Fake News and how do we spot it?

The term 'fake news' is used a lot nowadays. There are reports now that the Indian Government has been considering blocking out social media platforms Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Telegram in cases of emergencies so that 'fake news' does not spread and create more chaos among the public.

So what is this fake news? Simply put, it is news that has been made-up and may not be entirely true!

According to Claire Wardle of First Draft News, fake news can be placed into categories depending on the level of fabrication. For example, when we read a catchy headline but the content in the article is not really related to it, it can be called **false connection**. When photographs from one event are used for something else or are 'edited' to suit the article, it is known as **manipulated content**.

Why should we be careful about fake news? In most cases, 'fake news' is circulated by those individuals whose intent is to cause harm to another person or disrupt harmony in a community.

In earlier times, the reach of traditional news sources (newspapers, magazines and even TV news channels) was limited. It also took time to reach everyone. Now with social media and messaging services on mobile phones, news spreads like wild fire; it can reach thousands in a matter of seconds! With the ability to spread this quickly, fake news can do a lot of damage in society.

Let's take a look at some examples of 'fake news'...

1. Since May 2018, in different parts of India, nearly 20 people have been beaten up very badly by huge crowds of people because fake news of them being 'child kidnappers' was circulated on WhatsApp. After this and other hateful incidents, WhatsApp has now changed its rules. You can only forward a message to 5 chats at a time.
2. At the G20 summit in 2017, this doctored photograph that emerged was widely used to create hilarious memes. Take a look at the original and photoshopped photograph for yourselves!



Original Photo. Credit: The Indian Express

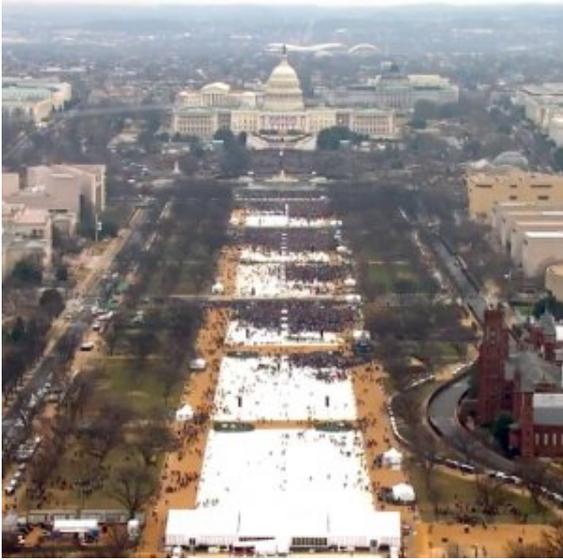


Photoshopped Photo. Credit: The Indian Express

3. During President Trump's inauguration in January, 2017, the then White House Press Secretary claimed that this had drawn "the largest audience to ever witnessed at an inauguration, period, both in person and around the globe." However, photographs from Barack Obama's inauguration in 2009 proved this to be false!



NY Times photo from Barack Obama's inauguration 2009



NY Times photo from Donald Trump's inauguration 2017

What can you do to help? Before you forward something, take a few seconds to check if it is true or not. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) have circulated this simple info-graphic that helps us identify 'fake news'.

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS



CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.



READ BEYOND

Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?



CHECK THE AUTHOR

Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?



SUPPORTING SOURCES?

Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.



CHECK THE DATE

Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.



IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.



CHECK YOUR BIASES

Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.



ASK THE EXPERTS

Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

If we act responsibly and check the information received before forwarding it to others, we will be able to control the spread of fake news very effectively.

IFLA

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions