

What's in the News? **A2-B1**



Do you read, watch or listen to the news? Where? TV, newspapers or radio? On websites or social media platforms? The Internet has changed the nature of news, and it can be difficult to know what is true and what isn't.

In 2017, a survey said that 67% of Americans get some of their news on social media – Twitter, Facebook or, for younger people, Snapchat.

When you watch a news bulletin on TV or look at a newspaper, you get the same news as someone else who watches or reads. You may not pay attention to all of it, but you have access to it.

When you get your news from a news feed on social media, it is unique to you. The site's algorithms will show you news because your online friends "like" it, or because it is similar to something you clicked on before. It can be easy to only see stories that express opinions you agree with. And by liking stories you influence what your friends see.

Analysts think that happened a lot during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. People who supported Donald Trump saw lots of positive stories about him, and negative stories about his opponent Hillary Clinton. The same was true for Clinton supporters.



The BBC has a project to help kids fact check news. Newsround is the BBC's news programme and website for kids. Newsround asked a primary-school class to look at these six stories and say which they thought were true or fake. What do you think?

Here are the headlines more clearly:

- Robot Becomes Headteacher in Wales
- 14-Year-Old to Play in 2018 World Cup
- Amazing Images of Real UFO Sighting
- Animal Experts Try to Find Out Why Panda Turned Yellow
- Teleportation Technology Tried on Cheeseburger
- Women Gives Birth to Four-Stone Baby*

*That's 25kg

Fake News

Some of those stories, usually the negative ones, were deliberately fake. The people who wrote them wanted to discredit one of the candidates.

But there are other types of fake news stories. Sometimes they are created to make people laugh. They are satirical. And there are stories that are deliberately sensational because if you click on the amazing headline, the site receives money from advertising. If lots of people click, they can make lots of money.

It's Unbelievable!

In a 2018 study published in *Science* magazine, scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology said that false news spreads on Twitter much faster than true news. They studied 125,000 stories, tweeted more than 4.5 million times. They said, "Whereas the truth rarely diffused to more than 1,000 people, the top 1% of false news diffused to between 1,000 and 100,000 people." And it spread up to 20 times faster.

They concluded that people like to share information that seems novel and unusual. Real news has to be realistic, which isn't always as interesting.

Teens and News

A 2017 British report asked 12-15-year-olds about the news.

96% of 12-15s are interested in news

Where do they get it from?



... and how many think these sources are truthful



The most popular news subjects were music, celebrities and sport. 37-33% of teens said they were interested in national news, animals and the environment, science and technology or local news.

46% of the teens who use social media for news said it was difficult to know if a story was true or not.

2017 Children's Media Use Report, Ofcom (UK), 29 November, 2017

Check the Facts

How can you tell if a story is true? There are some simple techniques:

- First, use your instinct. If it seems unbelievable, there is a good chance it isn't.
- Look where the story came from. Who wrote and published it? Was it a source you recognise and think is truthful?
- Look for a date. There are stories that get shared for years, for example alerts about kidnapped children.
- See if you can find other references to the same story. Are they from sources you recognise and think are truthful?
- But if you keep seeing exactly the same story with the same words, that's a sign that people are sharing and publishing it but they haven't checked it.



This is a poster from the International Federation of Library Associations.

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.