

FAKE OR REAL?

CAN YOU SPOT THE DIFFERENCE?

The use of exaggerated words or a headline all in CAPS are clues to be skeptical.

Parent tip: Talk to kids about fact vs. opinion and objective vs. subjective. (HINT: Ask: Is the author trying to persuade or inform?)

Fraudulent websites can use domain extensions to create web addresses that are very similar to existing, popular web addresses (“.co” is popular). Not all sites with domain extensions are fake — it’s just the ones that look eerily similar to the legitimate sites you already know.

Parent tip: Identify news sources you trust and how you know they’re legitimate. (HINT: It has professional journalists, it’s longstanding, and it’s available in more than one form.)

Images that are altered, manipulated, or downright fake warrant skepticism.

Parent tip: Find an image known to be fake and talk about how you might be able to tell it’s altered.

Grammatical errors can be a sign of low quality.

Parent tip: Why are errors a bad sign? (HINT: Real news sites use fact-checkers and copy editors and compete for attention with scooped stories and in-depth reporting.)

Use of outdated or fake dates should be a red flag.

Professional and expert quotes are used in most publications; lack of them should lead you to question what you are reading.

Parent tip: Check multiple sources to see if other outlets are reporting the same thing and to get other points of view. Also, what type of writing is it? (HINT: Investigative journalism? Blog?)

When a site lacks an “About Us” section or requires you to register to learn more about the site, that should be a red flag.

Parent tip: Kids can also play detective by trying to find out where the source’s funding comes from.

Beware of sites with lots of ads or images that could simply be used for clickbait.

Parent tip: Since news is available for free online, talk about how news organizations make money. (HINT: Most have subscribers and some ads.)

Sponsored content is just another way to say “ad.”

The use of a lot of exclamation points is a sign of low quality.

Parent tip: Real news won’t come with exclamation points. Encourage kids to dig deeper before deciding how to feel about what they see and hear.

