

# #YOUTHINK

**FIGHT  
FAKE  
NEWS**

**What's the big deal with false information?**

**Have you heard of a filter bubble?**

**Fact VS Opinion**

**Letters from Experts**

**THERE'S AN  
INFODEMIC GOING ON  
YOU ARE ON THE FRONTLINES!**



For most of our waking hours, we are all on the internet. If we're being honest, most of us sleep next to our phones, right? So checking in is the first thing we do in the morning, and the last thing we do at night.

**Why do we love the internet?**

**Let us count the ways:**

- It gives us updates on what's happening out there.
- It keeps us connected to our family and friends wherever they are in the world.
- It allows us to attend virtual classes and do our research.
- It gives us access to countless shows, games, songs and books.

But here's the catch: the internet is not completely benign or necessarily harmless. All the stuff you see, read and hear online aren't always true. Anyone can make fake news about anything and everything—from whom your favorite celebrities are dating, to someone claiming he has discovered a cure for cancer.

False information can be harmful. When fake photos and videos go viral, they may ruin reputations and make space for cyberbullying. Innocent-looking emails and websites could be trying to get your sensitive information.

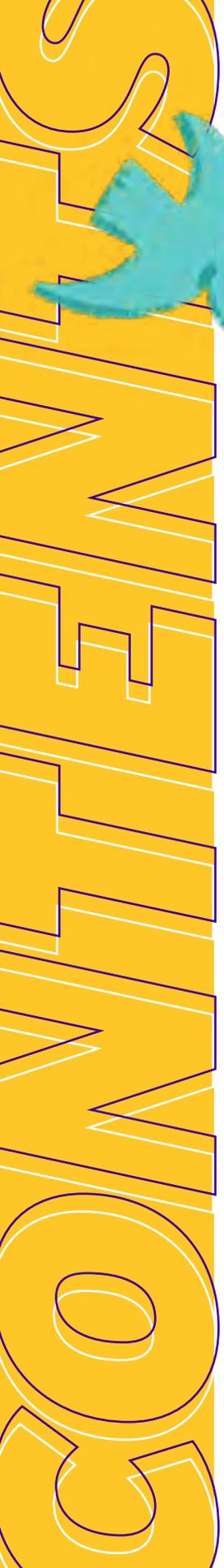
Merriam-Webster defines “infodemic” as the rapid and far-reaching spread of both accurate and inaccurate information. With so much information out there, how do we know which ones are fake and real?

**In this book, we will learn the following:**

- What's false information?
- How can we spot it?
- Why do people create and post fake news?
- Why are smart people fooled into believing and sharing it?
- What can we do to avoid being victims of false information?

**We can survive the infodemic by arming ourselves with the proper information—the kind that helps us be part of the solution instead of the problem.**

When you know how to handle false information, you make the internet a better place for yourself and other people.



## Editor's Note

**1**  
False information

**2**  
The many forms false information may take

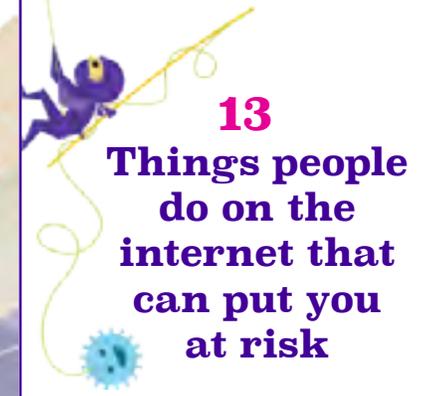
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# FALSE INFORMATION

*If you've been wondering why false information is such a big deal these days: it's because it totally is.*

SO WHAT IS IT REALLY?



**False information refers to all types of misinformation—or information that is just not true.**

*It covers all topics—from stuff about you or your friend, to serious topics like politics, climate change, and health.*

# THE MANY FORMS FALSE INFORMATION MAY TAKE

# PRES. ABANDONS MALACAÑAN

## 1 Misleading or out-of-context

*The information presented could be true, but is used in the wrong context.*

Misleading information is usually meant to confuse people and make them get the wrong idea about something that's true.

Confused? Check out the headline above as an example. From its title and picture, you'd think that the president abandoned his job and left us on our own! Though the words were true because the president did really leave Malacañan palace, the sense of panic the headline and photo created is uncalled for. After all, the president was only moving to Bahay Pangarap, a house located inside Malacañang Park. In fact, a couple of our presidents chose to live there.

Go ahead and fact-check it!

Often, headlines are written to sound urgent to hook readers. Who wouldn't want to read more about the president abandoning Malacañan? That's why it's important to read the whole article and not just its headline.

It could easily happen to you. Someone could twist your words or intention to give it an interpretation that's totally out of context.

For example, you saw an online post about someone harming an animal, and because you wanted to express your disgust, you shared the post with a sarcastic caption: "Oh, that's cute." Someone takes a screenshot of your post, shares the screenshot online, accusing you of thinking that animal cruelty is cute. People who don't even know you have suddenly formed a judgment about your beliefs and most will not believe you even if you clarify that you were, in fact, being sarcastic.

It's frustrating to be told we can't be spontaneous, but it is important to be cautious with our online activity because a lot of people would not be. We need to be careful with our words, and how we understand other people's words.

## 2 Intentionally deceptive news

*This is a type of article written for the actual purpose of making money, sowing confusion, or causing restlessness.*

*It has lies written all over it!*

These stories tend to be distributed through impostor news sites designed to look like 'legit' news brands. These often go with videos and pictures that have been manipulated in some way.

It can be hard work to figure out who and what to trust because the tools are readily available for anyone to easily produce online content (articles, videos, and images) whether real or fake.

**Organizations, businesses, writers, and other people make things up and tell lies for any number of reasons:**

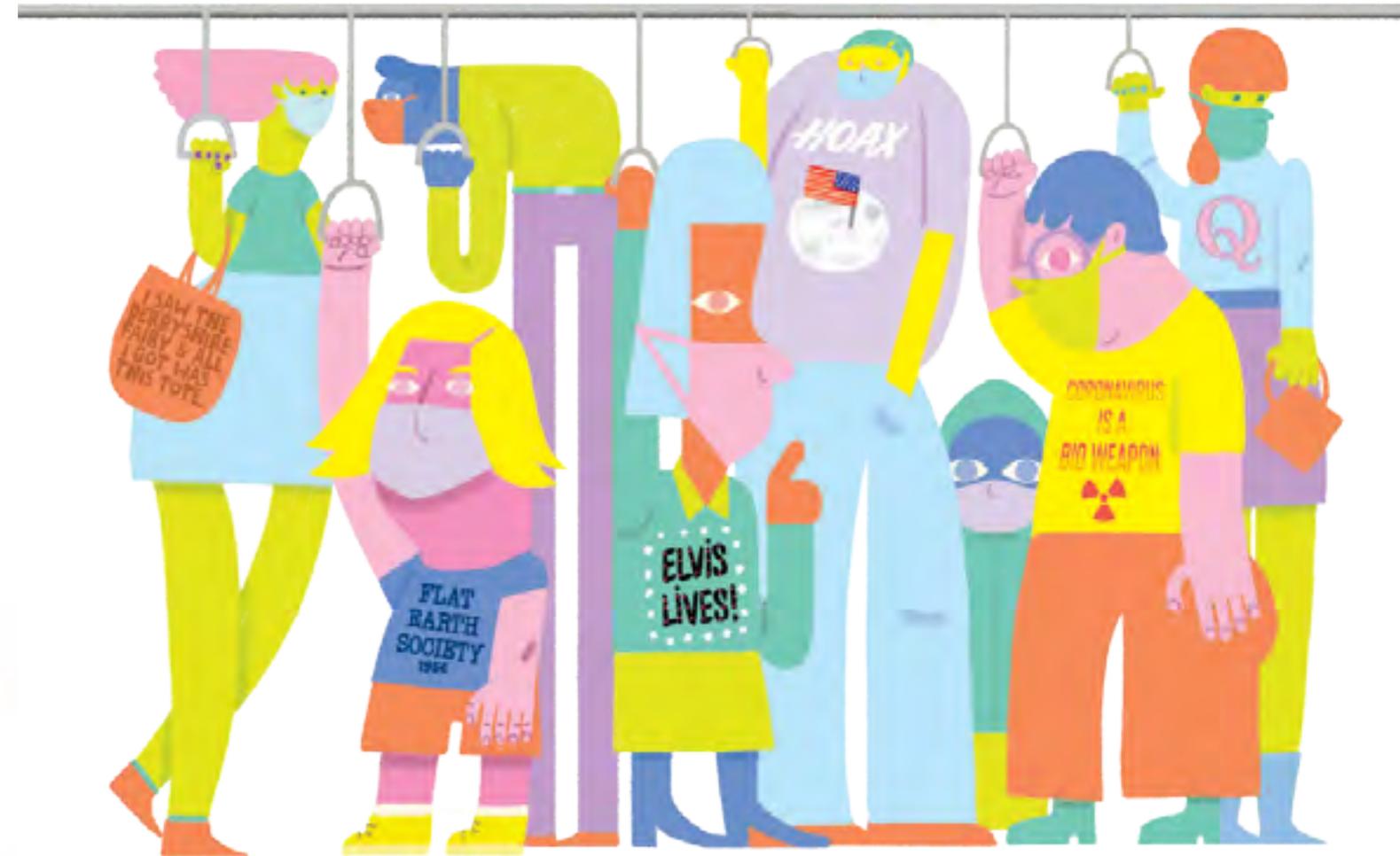
- They could be trying to bring someone down, or cast doubts on another person's credibility and reputation. You can see this happening a lot in politics or showbiz where fake information are posted to badmouth one side or one person. You'll see a lot more of this as we get closer to an election period!
- They may be trying to sell you something. They can come out with fake testimonials or tout unrealistic benefits that a product can bring, just to get you to part with your hard-earned money.
- They could be leading you to a harmful website where they can phish for your information, or else infect your computer with a virus.

**Or, there could be no reason at all. Maybe they just have nothing better to do!**



## 3 Conspiracy theories & propaganda

*Often used to mislead as well, they are generally not based on facts, but are convenient to share especially when they play to a person's opinion or bias.*



Conspiracy theories suggest that things we've long known as true were only made up by a small, secret group of people! Meanwhile, propaganda is often political in nature and is used to promote a certain point of view. Both types of information aim to mislead the public.

Do you know that there are still people who believe that the Earth is flat, or that COVID-19 is just a make-believe sickness? If you hadn't

studied in school that the Earth is imperfectly round and rotates on its own axis, and hadn't read that COVID-19 has claimed over a million lives worldwide, you'd probably believe these conspiracy theories!

Before believing a piece of news, research on it first. You may find out that it has already been debunked many times over by experts and credible research.

# 4 Biased writing or reporting

This kind of news isn't neutral or fair because it only shows one side of a story.

Responsible journalism includes writing or producing reports that show all the facts of a story, including its good and bad sides. When an article is biased, it means it's not telling the whole truth of the story—just some parts of it.

Remember that bias can also slip in unintentionally. The writer may believe in something or someone so much that he or she may not realize that the article is being written in a way that is less than

*The news isn't always neutral and could be advancing someone's agenda.*

objective. Journalists are still people and are not exempt from, much less forbidden to have their own views.

Professionals will limit the bias in their reporting by validating information—they make sure that what they print is the complete truth and they clearly say when they are not sure. (This is why you always see the word 'alleged' in news articles.)

For example, professional food critics will tell you when the food they're reviewing was given to them for free by the one who made the food, or if

they have a personal relationship with the business owner. This is so you can consider whether the food critic may just be giving a good review of the food as a thank-you or as a favor.

The next time you read up on a cool, new app that seems too good to be true—well, it probably is! Read more information about it, and ask reviews from friends who have actually tried it out. The article you read praising the app to high heavens might be a paid advertisement, which means it's biased to the nth degree!

- Always ask yourself:**
- Does the article cover all sides of the story?
  - Is the article overly critical or supportive?
  - Are their sources credible? Do they even cite or identify their sources?
  - Can you verify the article?
  - Is the story being reported by other news organizations or reporters?



**This is what climate change looks like... or doesn't look like.**



THIS IS WHAT A STARVING POLAR BEAR LOOKS LIKE.

The video, accompanied by sad music and the caption “This is what climate change looks like,” went viral. Seen by around 2.5 billion people, it became the most viewed video on the National Geographic website. People were genuinely shocked to see what the video claimed climate change had done to the polar bear.

But there was one problem. The cause of the polar bear’s condition was impossible to determine. For example, there are a variety of diseases and parasites that could have caused the animal to look that way. Saying that it was only because of climate change wasn’t all that accurate.

National Geographic was called out and forced to apologize. Its video was edited so that the first line now read “This is what a starving polar bear looks like.”

Mittermeier clarified that “[P]erhaps we made a mistake in not telling the full story—that we were looking for a picture that foretold the future and that we didn’t know what had happened to this particular polar bear. [...] I can’t say that this bear

was starving because of climate change, but I do know that polar bears rely on a platform of sea ice from which to hunt.”

The editor of National Geographic then admitted that “National Geographic went too far in drawing a definitive connection between climate change and a particular starving polar bear in the opening caption of our December 2017 video about the animal.”

This is what the Editor’s Note read: “While science has established that there is a strong connection between melting sea ice and polar bears dying off, there is no way to know for certain why this bear was on the verge of death.”

Climate change and its harmful effects on the planet and its creatures are very real and scary to think about. But is it right to exaggerate the truth, especially coming from a trusted publication like National Geographic? Did the need to make people more aware of climate change make this bit of fake news okay?



**In December 2017, National Geographic published a video of a polar bear that was almost skin and bones, moving very slowly, like it was struggling to carry itself. The video was taken by photographer Cristina Mittermeier, who said she wanted to capture images that would show the world the urgent need to act on climate change.**

**What do you think?**  
**Does the end justify the means?**



The thing with false information is that it can spread like wildfire on the internet in just a matter of seconds.

Here's one situation we are all too familiar with.

# WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL WITH FALSE INFORMATION?

A few taps on the smartphone are all it takes to spread false and potentially dangerous information from one person to a million others.

Once the information is out there, it becomes very hard to control.



1 A famous person tweets false information.



2 The tweet gets retweeted by thousands of people.



3 Retweets get captured in screenshots.



4 Screenshots are sent through chat apps.



5 The false info is rewritten on Facebook and IG.

6 The false info never dies.

INTRODUCING

# THE FILTER BUBBLE™

**FREE** WITH EVERY SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNT

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media platforms take careful note of what you like to talk about and share, and will give you more of that! For example, if Facebook knows that you've been liking cat photos lately, it's going to show you more cat photos! Purr-fect!

### With the Filter Bubble, you will:

- See only content that reflects your own likes, beliefs and biases!
- Stop being exposed to different thoughts and opinions!
- Limit your exposure to new things!

### But think about it...

- Is the Filter Bubble a good thing?
- What if you got stuck inside it... forever?
- What if everybody wore a Filter Bubble 24/7?

# THINGS PEOPLE DO ON THE INTERNET THAT CAN PUT YOU AT RISK

*Be aware of these risks, and have a safe time online.*

## Phishing

Phishing happens when you receive an email from a company or someone pretending to be a friend to get you to reveal personal information, such as your username, password, or phone number. Usually, phishing emails warn you about technical problems in your account, security issues or even a prize you've won! To remedy the fake problem or to claim your fake prize, the email contains a link or an attachment, which phishers want you to click on or download.

**1. It will be easier for impostors to get your personal information, which they can use to hack your accounts.** This often includes bank accounts, so warn your parents against emails that look like they came from their banks, asking them to give their usernames and passwords in order to "verify" their accounts. When they fall for this scam, the phisher can withdraw money or use your parents' bank accounts to buy stuff.

**2. Your computer could automatically get infected with malware, short for malicious software.** These are viruses and other nasty things that delete files, steal passwords, get personal information, and damage your computer.

**Be extra careful and think before clicking!**





## **Fake Pictures**

Nowadays, you don't need to be a professional photo editor to brighten, darken, crop, and adjust the quality of your photos. Anyone can do this, thanks to photo editing tools on the web. Even with the most basic skills, you can edit your profile pic to make it look like you were in Antarctica during the pandemic.

Those who spread false information can also edit photos. False photos can make fake news seem real and more likely to be shared. Fake images can influence public opinion or cause emotional distress.



## **Deepfakes**

A "deepfake" is a video or audio recording created using artificial intelligence (AI), showing real people doing and saying things they never did. How freaky is that?!

There is no doubt that as technology improves, there will be more and more videos being shared that are designed to intentionally mislead and spread false information.

Can you imagine deepfakes of your idols spreading around? How about of presidents and dead people? The possibilities and effects can be really serious if we don't take a stand against the irresponsible use of technology!

WATCH OUT FOR

# FAKE PHOTOS

**Spot the difference!**



Many fake news stories use images that are **Photoshopped** or taken from an **unrelated site**.

TAKE NOTE!

# CONTEXT IS IMPORTANT

Context refers to the circumstances surrounding an event, statement, or idea. It helps to give a more complete background of the article or news.



For example, when someone tells his mother **“I didn’t tell you, but I stayed out late last night with my friends,”** the mother’s reaction will depend on the context. She would definitely be more concerned if the child was a 10-year-old boy than if her son was already a grown-up 24-year-old man.

# WHAT'S THAT WORD

## DOWN

- 1 Content presented that tends to reflect or reinforce our own likes, views, and beliefs
- 2 Real, genuine, true, or accurate; not fake or copied
- 3 Able to be relied on to do what is right or what is needed
- 6 Information that is false or intended to mislead
- 8 Fake news stories presented as humor or to make fun of actual people and events
- 10 False; an action or message designed to fool, trick, or mislead someone
- 13 Believable; uses evidence so you can be confident they are telling the truth
- 15 Videos that use artificial intelligence technology to deceive by showing real people doing and saying things they never actually did

## ACROSS

- 4 Something that can be proven or shown to be true or correct
- 5 An attempt to scam you or trick you into sharing login information or other personal information online; usually done through email, ads, or sites that look similar to ones you're already used to
- 7 The reason someone does something; intention
- 9 Manipulative online posts or ads designed to capture your attention and get you to click on a link or webpage
- 11 Someone or something that provides information
- 12 Facts or examples that prove something is true or false
- 14 A dishonest attempt to make money or gain something else of value by tricking people

Can the answers  
Be somewhere here?  
Hmmm...

DECEPTIVE

TRUSTWORTHY

CREDIBLE

MOTIVE

PHISHING

DEEFAKE

DISINFORMATION

AUTHENTIC

FILTER BUBBLE

SATIRE

EVIDENCE

VERIFIABLE

SOURCE SCAM



# WHY DO PEOPLE CREATE OR SHARE FALSE INFORMATION?

So why do these people create false information?  
**The most common reason is that they can make money from it!**

At its worst, fake information can be used to “phish” or to try and steal your information or money.

By making up stories that can go viral, people can generate money through advertising.

Owners of websites with content that can generate tons of likes, shares, and reactions—whether the content is true or not—get approached by companies that want to advertise and spend money. The same is true in the case of articles.

The more taps or clicks an article gets, the more money online publishers make through advertising.



**Fake information can also be used to sow confusion and to deliberately misinform.**

- They want someone elected, or want to put the other candidate in a bad light.
- They want to ruin someone’s reputation.
- They want to promote a certain belief or cause.
- They want to harm a business competitor.

**But very often, people share false information because they got fooled themselves.** They may not even know that the information they’re sharing is false.

For example, many people shared a study that found early evidence of combining a popular anti-malaria drug and a common antibiotic as effective in treating COVID-19. What they didn’t know was that the study was not yet conclusive and turned out to be false.

Worse, the combined drugs could affect the heart, leading to sudden death. The news went viral simply because people thought they were sharing something useful.

No matter how good your intentions are, be careful with what you share!



Before sharing,  
**ASK  
YOURSELF:**

**DO  
I REALLY  
NEED  
TO  
SHARE  
THIS?**

**Think twice, and then think again before you share anything.**

You may have good intentions, but you could actually be costing lives by sharing something you know nothing about, even if you think that the information comes from experts.

**SPOTTED!**

**How to spot  
false information**

**Who is the source of information?**

Is it a reputable website? Is the person trustworthy?

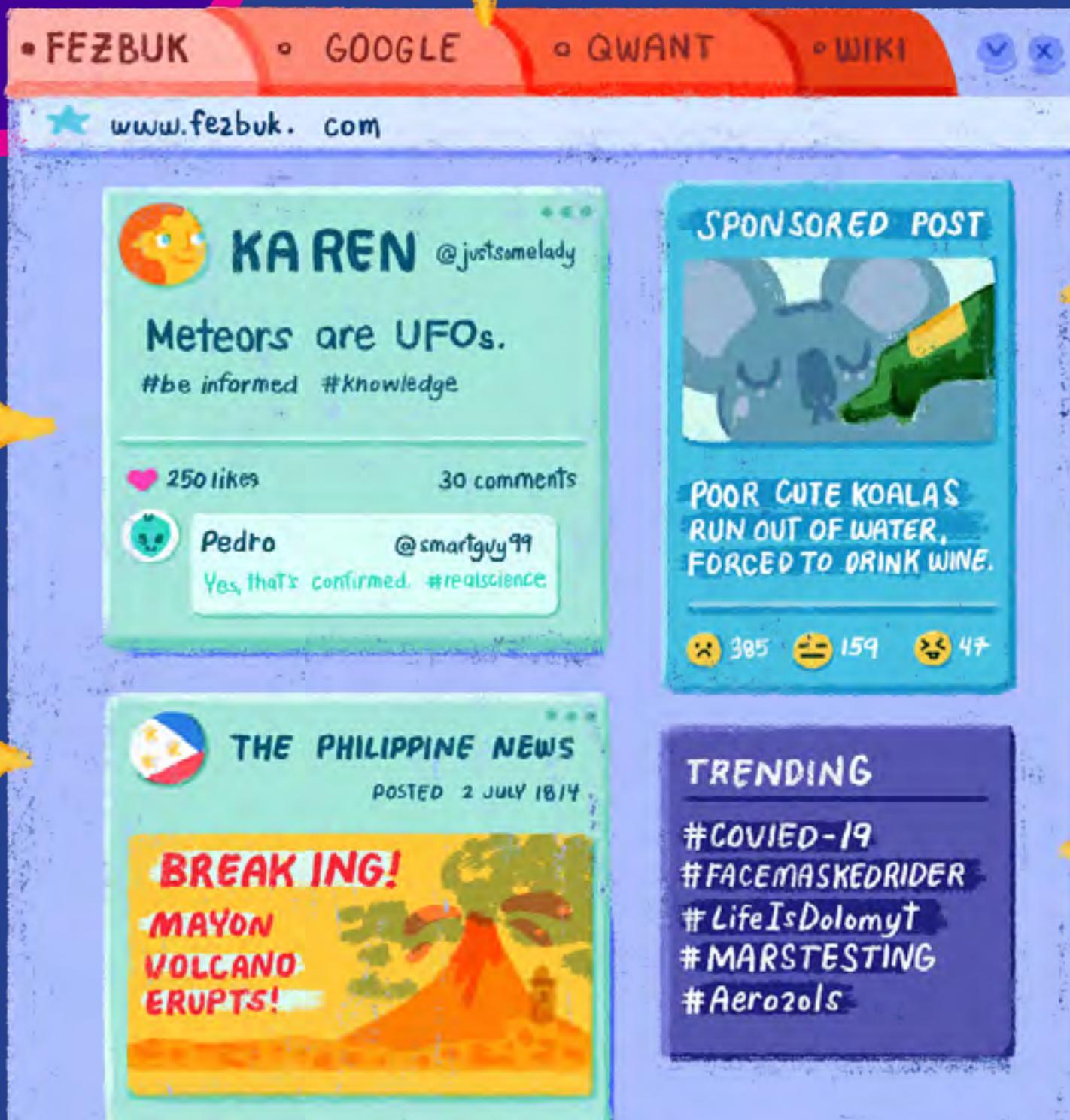
**NOTE:** Even if the info came from a trusted source, it's wise to double check it.

**Check the date.**

People sometimes share old news stories or pictures that can be confused as current events.

**Check multiple sources.**

You can also use a search engine like Google to see if there are other reliable sites that carry the same story. If known and reputable news organizations are not reporting on the story, it's probably fake. Look up the title of the article to see if it has been identified as false news by the mainstream media or fact-checking organizations like Snopes.



**Does the headline give you strong feelings? Are the images shocking?**

Does it make you overly happy, angry, or scared? Misinformation goes viral because it plays on our emotions, which ought to give you warning bells about its authenticity.

**Look for signs of low quality**

Credible journalists and organizations are less likely to make repeated spelling and grammar mistakes.

**Does the article present all sides of the issue?**

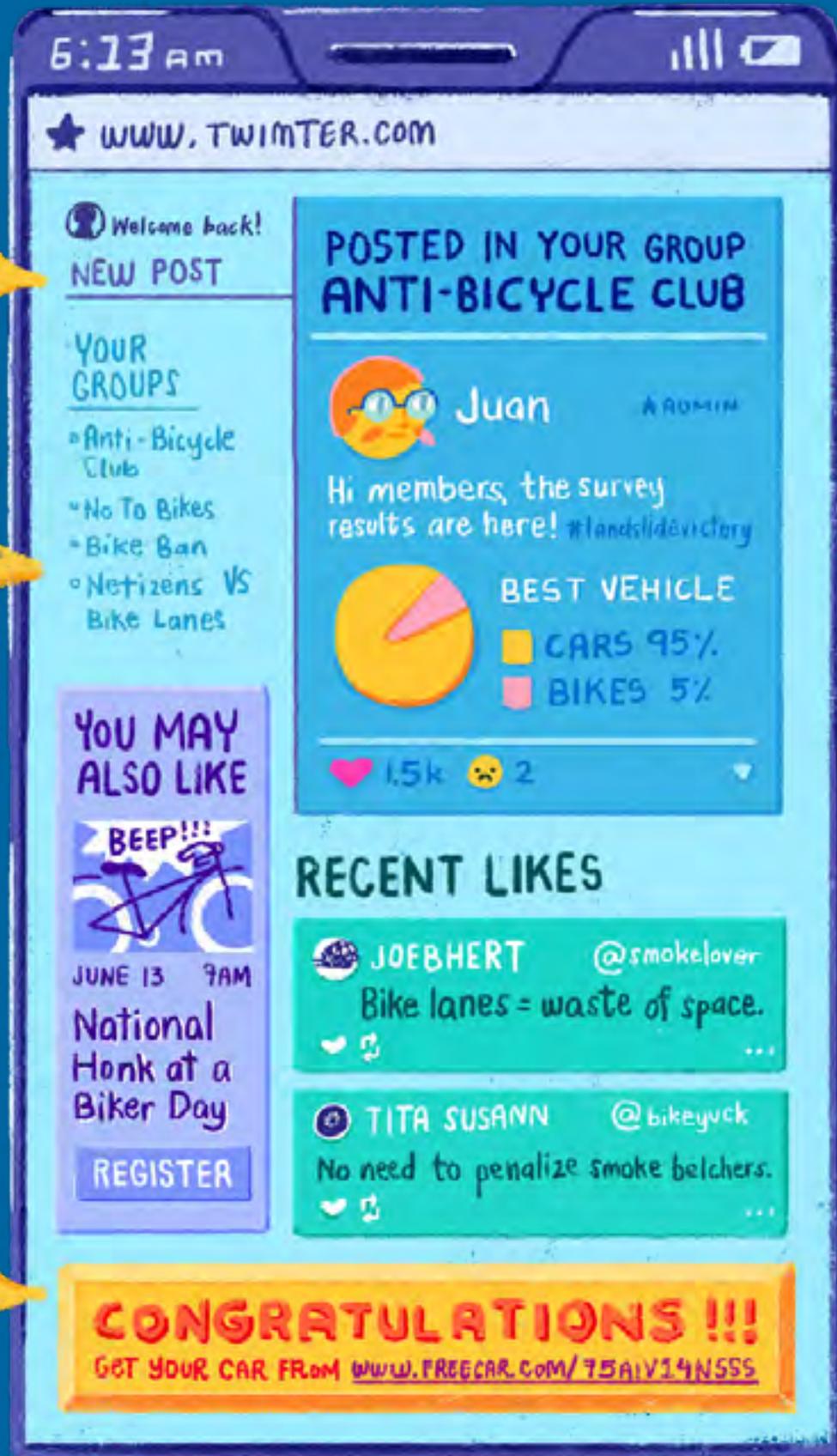
If the article gives only one side of the argument, remember that you are not seeing the full story.

**Check your biases.**

This is difficult, but just be aware that social media sites know a lot about you, and will tend to show you news that you are more likely to engage with even if they are false.

**Look at the URL before you tap or click.**

Scammers will sometimes use fake versions of real businesses' web addresses to trick you into visiting them. Check for misspellings. Even a small difference can take you to an impostor website.



# FACT

Something that has been proven to be true

VS

# FACTUAL STATEMENTS

Claims that can be proven to be true or false

VS

# OPINION

A statement of a person's thoughts or beliefs. You can agree or disagree with an opinion.

Information comes from EVERYWHERE: the internet, radio, TV, books, and newspapers.

Knowing the difference between

# FACT and OPINION

will help you know what's REAL and what's MISLEADING.

A **fact** is something **proven to be true.**

For example, the statement “COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a virus” is a fact. Scientists have irrefutable evidence that it is a virus, that it gets people sick, and that sick people can then give the virus to other people.

However, a fact is different from a **factual statement.** A factual statement is not exactly a statement that states facts, but a statement that **could be verified as true or false** based on facts.

This means, “Smoking is dangerous to your health” and “The Earth is flat” are both factual statements. But once we look at facts, we will know that the first statement is true, while the second one is false. We can disagree with a factual statement if we can provide objective evidence to disprove it.

**Opinions** are subjective and are **neither right nor wrong.**

It is up to you to agree or disagree with an opinion such as “Popular music in the 1980s is much better than today’s music.” People will have different views on the subject. There is no basis to say whether one is right or wrong, even if you agree with one particular side.

ALWAYS  
**ASK**  
YOURSELF

Can I verify whether that statement is true or not?

Is his or her opinion based on facts?

## LOOK AT THE PICTURE OF THE CAT.

Can you come up with facts and opinions about the picture?



Some **facts** for the picture could include:

- The cat has yellow eyes.
- The cat is wearing a party hat.
- There is a cupcake with a pink candle.

Some **opinions** for the picture could include:

- The cat is cute.
- Most people would probably prefer a funny picture of a dog.
- It looks like a naughty cat.

By learning to separate facts from opinions, you can think independently, making you less likely to fall for fake news or misinformation.

Can you tell the difference between a **Factual Statement** and an **Opinion**?

Write **F** beside statements you think are **factual**, and **O** beside statements which you think are **opinions**.

President Cory Aquino was a good president.



Learning to read will help a child grow into a productive citizen.

A B C

The United States has shown that it values human rights more than China does.



More people from my generation use Instagram than Facebook.



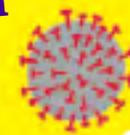
It's about time that the Roman Catholic Church consider allowing women to become priests.



There will be less pollution and noise if there were less cars on the road.



Our government needs to prepare for the likelihood of another pandemic happening in the future.



Smoking is dangerous to your health.



Quezo de bola slices go very well with warm pandesal.



Couples should get married first before they have children.



More Filipinos are going abroad today than ten years ago.



Tisoy would be a very weird name for a typhoon.



Jose Rizal was an outstanding writer, as proven by the two books that he wrote, Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo, which are still being read today.



Man landed on the moon in 1969.



It will be better for every one if cars were disallowed and every one was encouraged to ride bicycles instead.



**YOU ARE ENTITLED TO YOUR OWN OPINION.  
BUT YOU ARE NOT ENTITLED TO YOUR OWN FACTS.**

Daniel Patrick Moynihan

**LETTERS**

**FROM**

**EXPERTS**



**POLITICS**

**Protect democracy from fake news and disinformation.**

Atty. Luie Guia

**HEALTH**

**We can all be part of the solution.**

Dr. Edsel Salvana

**SCIENCE**

**Trust science. Stand guard over truth.**

Dr. Reina Reyes  
Dr. Jacklyn Cleofas

**MEDIA**

**You can and must fight fake news and misinformation.**

Dr. Clarissa David

**POLITICS**

**Protect democracy from fake news & disinformation.**



**Atty. Luie Guia**



*Atty. Luie Guia is a nationally recognized electoral reform specialist, and was a Commissioner of the Philippine Commission on Elections from 2013 to 2020.*

**We know that we live in a democracy because when we are old enough to vote, we get to choose the people who will lead our country and our communities. We get to select the officials who will make sure that our neighborhood is safe, and that garbage is collected regularly.**

In a democracy, no one can take away our right to choose our leaders by voting. It is a human right. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) says that “[e]very one has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.”

But even if it’s not written down anywhere, our right to vote still exists. It is inherent.



According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), every citizen, regardless of his or her “race, colour, sex, language, religion, public or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,” has the right to vote and be voted for.

Again, even if it’s not written, everyone of age should still have the right to vote.

Before voting, get to know our candidates well. Learn about their background, personal beliefs, values and principles, opinions on important issues, work experience, and other information. Without the right information, our right to vote becomes meaningless. We might end up electing the wrong people.

Advances in technology have made information more available to us. With just a few taps on the screen, we can read a lot about candidates. Information is available on different websites and social media platforms. Even the candidates themselves have social media accounts!

But not all candidates are trustworthy. Some will do anything to get your vote. This includes paying people to write good things about them even if they aren’t true. Candidates may even post untrue things about themselves, such as awards they never really received or good deeds they never really performed. These lies can also be done through “deepfakes” or edited pictures and videos, like showing a candidate distributing relief goods somewhere he or she has never set foot in!

People who don’t verify this information may end up liking or sharing them. They get misinformed, and in turn, misinform more people who end up voting for the wrong candidate.

Fake news and misinformation threaten our democracy by deceiving us and making us form wrong opinions. If people want us to believe that Filipinos are violating quarantine rules, they might share a picture of a crowded street when in fact, the photo was taken years ago before the quarantine!

Together, we can protect our democracy by doing these things:

- Verify information. Before believing information about a candidate, ask where it came from. Is it from a trustworthy news organization? Who is sharing it?
- Avoid spreading false information. If we receive information by way of posts and tweets, don’t share it right away. Do your own fact-checking first.
- When in doubt, ask your parents or a trusted adult. Your parents who have lived longer than you most probably know of a candidate’s controversial history that he or she is trying to hide during campaign. Together, you can navigate the internet to find out which candidates are worthy of their votes.

**Remember, false information is everywhere. Protecting yourself from it means protecting our country’s future. ★**



# We can all be part of the solution.

**Dr. Edsel Salvana**

The year 2020 will be remembered in history as the year when lockdowns were declared in almost all parts of the Philippines, and in practically all other countries around the world. It will be remembered as the year we all learned about social distancing, and when we all gained a better appreciation for eating nutritious foods, taking vitamins, and washing our hands frequently.

More than ever, we all realized how big a part the internet played in our lives. Aside from allowing us to video chat and play games with our friends, it served as our convenient source of important information about COVID-19.

As much as the internet has helped us a great deal, it also enabled the spread of fake news and inaccurate information across websites, social media networks, email, and messaging apps. It's so easy to copy, paste, and share fake news. This is a sad reality, but on the brighter side, it's also an opportunity for us to do something.

We can be the gatekeepers for truth on the internet, protecting our friends, loved ones, and the rest of the country and the world from fake news and lies that sow seeds of panic, hatred, and ignorance. We can do this within the comfort of our homes.



**Dr. Edsel Salvana** is an infectious disease specialist, molecular epidemiologist and the Director of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology at the National Institutes of Health at the University of the Philippines Manila. He is a member of the government's Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) technical advisory group.



Here are a few things you can do to avoid being the victim—or worse, the sharer of fake news:

- Remember that news items with anonymous and unverifiable sources are likely fake. Never share stories that only cite “reputable informants” or a “person with inside knowledge” as the source of some Earth-shattering revelation.
- Look at the website source. If the article is from “ufoconspiracyexperts.com” or “aliensarereal.net,” it’s probably not reliable. Enough said.
- Sensational headlines and definitive claims are likely misinterpretations. For example, a headline like “Teenagers, safe from COVID-19” is simply wrong. Though young adults are less likely to display severe symptoms of COVID-19, there is still a chance for them to be infected. They are just as likely to get COVID-19 as any other age group, and spread the virus. These details, unfortunately, are very subtle and requires considerable research and effort to learn. When it comes to medical emergencies or other complex situations, it is best to be very careful and to consult an expert before sharing anything.
- Always check the date of the article. Many people have been fooled by an old article.

Some cite old news or information that may have been refuted by later developments.

- Find out who the author of the article is. Understand the differences between a news report with credible sources, and an opinion piece which doesn’t need to be fact-checked by reputable publications.

The coronavirus pandemic is not the first, and may not be the last global health crisis we will experience. During the lockdown, the internet helped spread the importance of staying at home, physical distancing and frequent hand washing.

But if important, accurate, and truthful information can spread fast, so can fake, inaccurate, or outdated news. This may lead to serious consequences, like people taking harmful substances in the belief that such could protect them from COVID-19. Because the internet is still unable to separate fact from fiction and reject the latter on its own, it is up to us to be discerning.

**We can all be part of the solution.**

We need to actively fight misinformation. Just as we want to put an end to pandemics, we must also work toward the end of fake news. ★

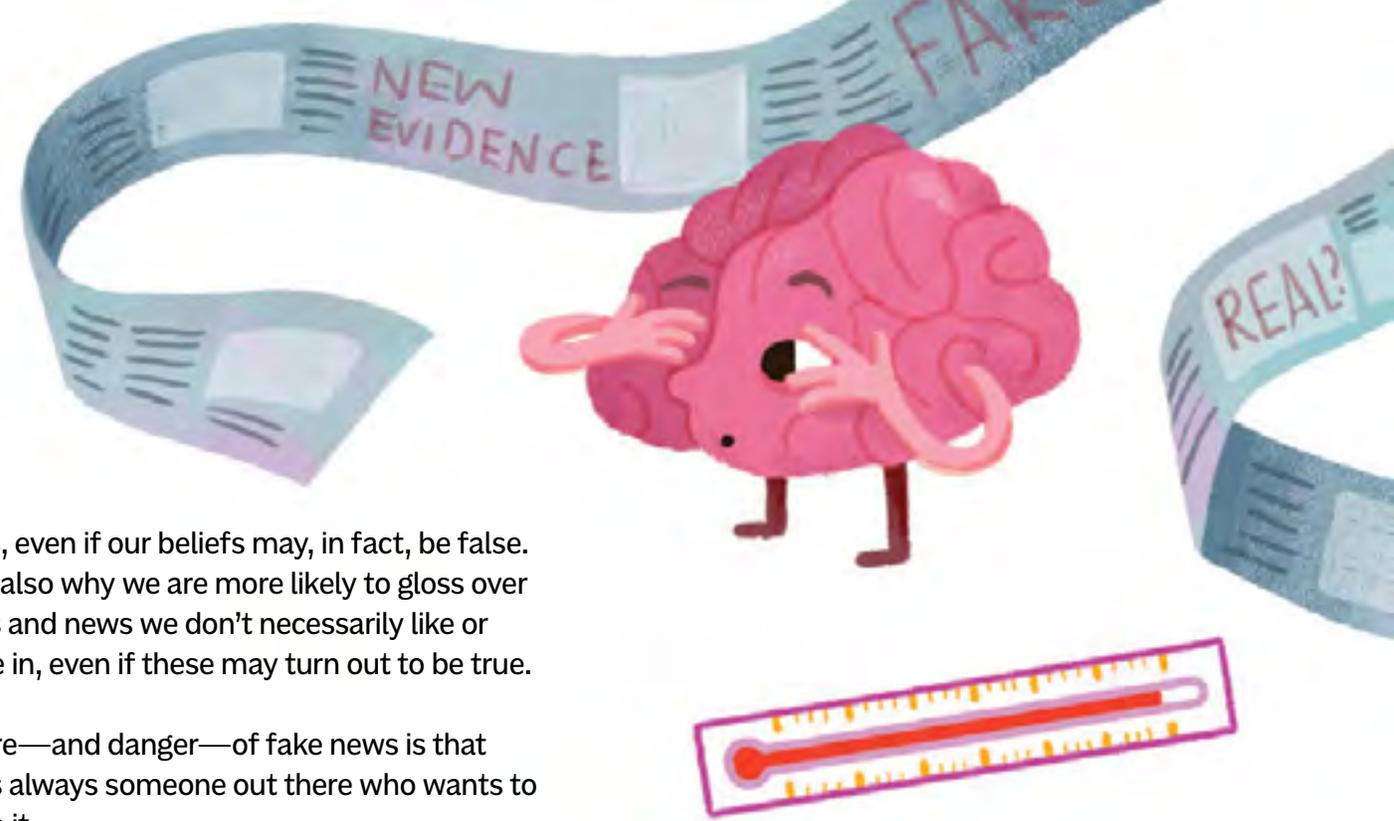
# Trust science. Stand guard over truth.

**Dr. Reina Reyes**  
**Dr. Jacklyn Cleofas**



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Dear young people,

**I hear some of you are worried about getting fooled by fake news.**

That's perfectly understandable. This is also a concern among adults, including the people you look up to the most.

A big part of the reason is the way our brains work. We are wired to keep believing the things we already believe in. We are constantly justifying our beliefs, coming up with arguments in their favor and blocking or ignoring facts that run counter to those.

Psychologists call this behavior "confirmation bias." The APA Dictionary of Psychology describes it as "the tendency to gather evidence that confirms preexisting expectations, typically by emphasizing or pursuing supporting evidence while dismissing or failing to seek contradictory evidence."

Simply put, people see what they want to see. This is why we like to read, watch, or listen about things that affirm and strengthen our

beliefs, even if our beliefs may, in fact, be false. This is also why we are more likely to gloss over stories and news we don't necessarily like or believe in, even if these may turn out to be true.

The lure—and danger—of fake news is that there's always someone out there who wants to believe it.

Some people repost fake news that humans have not actually landed on the Moon, despite all the evidence to the contrary. There are even people who believe that the Earth is flat!

There are still many people who don't believe that climate change is caused by human activity, despite all the evidence and science that confirm that fact.

The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in addition to many scientists around the world, have concluded that climate change is real, and that human activities are its main cause. The concentration of greenhouse gases in our planet's atmosphere has been increasing since the Industrial Revolution. The average global temperature is rising with it.

Carbon dioxide, which accounts for approximately two-thirds of greenhouse gases, is a product of burning fossil fuels.

Our oceans are getting warmer, our ice sheets are shrinking, our sea levels are rising, yet there are still people who choose to turn a blind eye to climate change.

The people who don't believe in climate change or that humans landed on the Moon are more likely to believe and share fake news items that support these beliefs. And the more they read and share fake news, the stronger they hold on to these mistaken beliefs.

The consequences can be very bad. People who don't know any better and read these posts might believe them. More people might refuse to change their habits that harm the environment.

Governments could fail to create policies and laws that protect the Earth, to the detriment of future generations—including yours.

## What can we do about this?

Now that we know that our brains can fool us, you can be more careful about how you take in news that we hear and read about.

As scientists and researchers, we have learned how to sift through a lot of information and judge if they are based on sound reasoning and evidence. We don't take anything at face value.

Even for experts like us, this takes a lot of time and effort. We have to read many papers and studies on the topic, listen carefully to what experts in the field have to say, and interpret what we read based on our own understanding. Before any scientific journal decides to publish a paper we wrote, the paper must first undergo peer review, a lengthy process by which other scientists closely read and critique it.

We seek to understand not only the "what", but also the "how" and the "why".

We ask: How do we know what we know? What are the things we understand quite well, and what are those that we still need to study further?

You can start doing this as well.

Next time you encounter a post about a topic you care about, resist the temptation to share it automatically. Be curious to learn more. Take the time to read more widely about the issue.

Ask questions and do not simply believe everything you read. Be alert even to your own thoughts. You will find that just as there are many things that we do know with confidence, there are many more things we are less sure about or that we don't understand fully yet.

You will discover that you can be part of this quest for understanding. In fact, by reading and asking questions, you already are!

You can then tell others about what you've learned, what you believe and why, in your own words, and how your beliefs have changed, after learning about something more deeply. By finding your voice, you will lead others to do the same.

In this age of fake news, where facts are often rendered invisible, it becomes a moral responsibility to stand guard over the truth, over what is just, and over what is truly important.

We have no doubt you can shine a light on what our country and the world need to pay attention to. Those who came before you will be cheering you on, and those who will come later will forever be grateful. ★

## MEDIA

# You can and must fight fake news and misinformation.

**Dr. Clarissa David**



*Dr. Clarissa David is a Professor at the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication specializing in research on political communication and news media effects.*



**You and I were taught by our parents, teachers, and elders not to lie. Lying is bad. If you get caught lying, you are punished.**

**Why is this? Why is it bad to lie?**

Believing in and sharing obviously fake news is bad for your reputation.

The simple answer is that when people lie, they cannot be trusted. If we cannot trust the people and information around us, it makes it very difficult to move around in the world. If you cannot be trusted to tell the truth, you will have difficulty getting other people to work with or be friends with you. Sharing fake news not only does real harm, it also reveals your character or lack of good judgment. All this can be avoided by checking before you share, or by not sharing when you're not sure.





On the internet, it's even worse and more complicated. When people promote stories they know are false or misrepresent the truth, they are lying. But when people genuinely believe what they are saying is true, or share news they did not know were lies, they are also victims, and unfortunately for them, they, too, will be seen as untrustworthy.

Here are some tips to help you avoid that situation.

**1 Accuracy matters.**

You may have heard this expression: "We are entitled to our own opinions, but we are not entitled to our own facts." Raw facts and information are different from opinions. Fake news stories most often contain wrong, incorrect, or inaccurate information. Or they could simply be opinions. The difference matters.

Filipinos with strong political opinions distrust traditional news media, dismissing it as a source of fake news, and instead, rely on bloggers and influential people on Facebook. Because of how Facebook often works, what they will see will only be those views that support their own, whether factual or not.



But accuracy matters, especially in times of grave uncertainty like a typhoon, an economic market crash, or a global health pandemic. When it comes to medicine, science, disasters, and many other situations where factual information could spell the difference between life and death, getting information from trusted and credible sources is important. Fake news is not a harmless artifact of social media; it has real consequences.

The more we accept that truth is relative and facts are no different from opinion, the more easily we will be fooled into putting our own selves—and others—in harm's way.

**2 Be open to ideas, information, and opinions you may not like.**

Discussion, debate, and disagreements are important parts of living in a democracy to help us arrive at the truth. If we don't talk to each other, we won't see how the world looks through another person's eyes. It is important to stay open-eared and open-minded, to be ready to listen to information that might prove your beliefs wrong.

**3 Agreeing to disagree is not always helpful.**

Being open to opposing ideas also means being prepared take a stand and call out people when their false views can cause serious harm.

Many of us are uncomfortable with heated discussion or debate. We are afraid to hurt the other person's feelings, especially if he or she is a friend. We are also afraid of sounding or looking unreasonable or overly opinionated.

For example, some people believe that vaccines are dangerous despite overwhelming scientific evidence to the contrary. Others deny that climate change is real despite near-universal consensus from the scientific community that it is happening and that we need to take serious steps to adapt to its effects. Still, others are actively trying to revise history, denying the horrific abuses and billions plundered by the Marcos regime. How will our children learn the lessons of history if those lessons are rendered debatable?

Always rely on science and facts, and seek out experts you can genuinely trust. Armed with true information, fight back and take a stand when called for. Sometimes, staying quiet—and agreeing to disagree—will only keep the lie alive.

**4 Read the story, not just the headline.**

One of the best ways to guard against fake news is to read the whole news story. This way, you get more information, which you can use to judge whether the headline and its interpretation is true or fair. Along the way, you'll learn which sources are to be believed. Always ask yourself: Who is writing this? Why is it being written? What is the purpose of the story?

Be suspicious of people's motives. The motive of news organizations is to stay economically viable. For some, credibility and consistency in truth-telling are their motivation. However, there are others that create provocative headlines, hoping to bait readers into clicking, reading and ultimately sharing misleading and outright false articles.

It is easy to be misled, but it can also be easy to tell the difference if you remain aware of fake news. It is a skill that grows with constant practice, so keep at it!



**5 Humility is a virtue.**

One final tip—always remain humble. No matter how careful we are, how expert we might be in a particular field, or how educated we are, we are bound to make mistakes here and there. It is sometimes difficult to tell the fake from the real, especially when disinformation is professionally done. Fake stories could be branded with a newspaper's name and logo, just as disreputable websites could be made to look and read like legitimate news.

I have certainly made these mistakes. Friends have called me out, and I have taken down posts and admitted I was wrong. By doing this, I help to slow down false stories in circulation, but also serve as an example that there's nothing wrong with admitting your mistakes and taking steps to correct them.

What is in our control is our civility. No matter how shameless the lies are, or how angry online content makes us, always conduct yourself in a respectful manner. The people who truly matter will respect you more because of it. ★



Spot the difference PAGE 16



ANSWERS!

ANSWERS!

What's that word PAGE 18



ANSWERS!

Factual statement or opinion PAGE 28

President Cory Aquino was a good president. **O**

Learning to read will help a child grow into a productive citizen. **F**

The United States has shown that it values human rights more than China does. **F**

More people from my generation use Instagram than Facebook. **F**

It's about time that the Roman Catholic Church consider allowing women to become priests. **O**

Our government needs to prepare for the likelihood of another pandemic happening in the future. **O**

Smoking is dangerous to your health. **F**

There will be less pollution and noise if there were less cars on the road. **F**

Tiny would be a very weird name for a typhoon. **O**

Jose Rizal was an outstanding writer, as proven by the two books that he wrote: Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo, which are still being read today. **O**

Man landed on the moon in 1968. **F**

Queso de bola slices go very well with warm pandesal. **O**

Couples should get married first before they have children. **O**

More Filipinos are going abroad today than ten years ago. **F**

It will be better for everyone if cars were disallowed and everyone was encouraged to ride bicycles instead. **O**



The Center for Art, New Ventures & Sustainable Development (CANVAS), a nonprofit organization, believes that Philippine art can create possibilities, open conversations and inspire meaningful change. Since 2005, CANVAS has been working with the creative community to promote children's literacy, explore national identity, and broaden public awareness of Philippine art, culture and the environment.

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