

Disinformation Stops With You

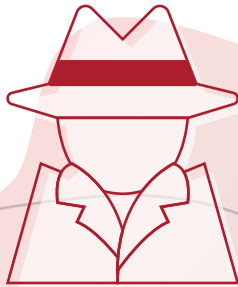
You have the power to stop foreign influence operations.



Recognize the risk

Understand how foreign actors try to affect behavior.

Foreign actors might build an audience by starting or joining groups and spreading entertaining, non-controversial content. Eventually, they sprinkle in disinformation and steer followers to more extreme positions. The same actor will do this in many groups and pit them against each other.



Question the source

Check who produced the content and question their intent.

Foreign actors can spend a lot of money to make disinformation seem like entertainment or news. U.S. laws require such agents engaged in political activities to disclose their relation to foreign governments. Look for those disclosures and think about what slant that relationship might put on how they report before accepting it as truth or linking to it online.



Investigate the issue

Search for other reliable sources before sharing.

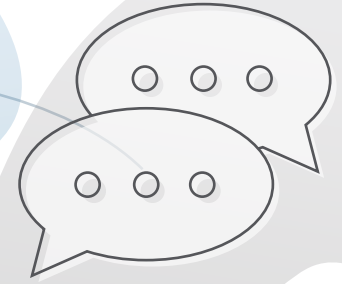
Do a quick search for other reliable sources before sharing a controversial or emotionally charged article, post, tweet, or meme you read. Studies show that being well informed requires getting information from many places. If it isn't from a credible source or if you can't find a second reliable source, don't share it.



Think before you link

Ask yourself why you're sharing—and let your emotions cool.

Take a moment before sharing a link, email, or other message. Disinformation is designed to make you feel angry, shocked, or smug – always ask yourself why you're sharing first. Are you posting to improve the conversation? Taking no action can be the best way to improve a discussion and thwart disinformation.



Talk to your circle

Talk with your social circle about the risks of spreading disinformation.

It's probably not worth engaging with every piece of disinformation, but if you are concerned with its spread you may want to speak out. Share what you know about the risks of spreading disinformation and how you handle it. Confronting with emotion may backfire, so when possible, combine humor with facts.



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To learn more about how you can stop disinformation, visit our website at www.dhs.gov/cisa/protect2020.



Recognize the Risk

Understand how adversaries try to influence behavior.

Adversaries spread false or misleading information to blur the line between fact and fiction. Read about the tactics foreign adversaries use below so you are better prepared to identify it.

Identify a divisive issue

Adversaries are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to inflame hot button issues in the United States.



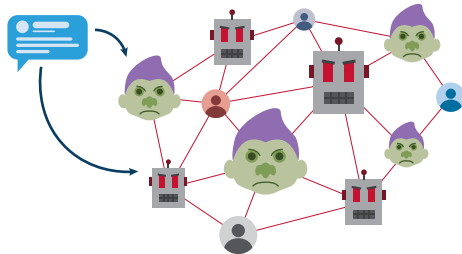
Build a following

Adversaries will often begin by sharing non-controversial content to fit in and gain trust. Once they have a large audience, they share more extreme and divisive messages.



Amplify and distort

Disinformation is amplified over social media platforms, state-funded television stations, and radio channels. Adversary foreign officials even use false or misleading public statements to provide disinformation a credible disguise and inject false narratives into the mainstream media.



Make it mainstream

The goal of adversaries is to get divisive issues covered in mainstream media so that their controversial views gain legitimacy.



Take it to the real world

In the past, adversaries have organized or funded protests to further stoke divisions among Americans. The goal is to take what started online to the streets where Americans are shouting down other Americans.



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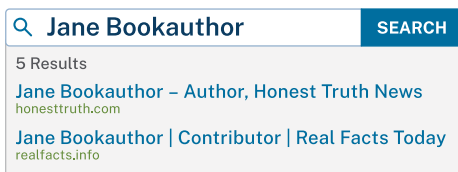
Question the Source

Check who produced the content and question their intent.

A lot of foreign influence content is designed to look like real news – the following best practices will help you discern quality content and avoid being duped. Look for a diversity of credible sources. You should be able to trust that the author's ideas are their own, are unbiased, and are backed up by sound, fact-based evidence.

Check the author

Check to see that the author is clearly identified. Do a search on them. Are they real? What are their qualifications for covering the topic? Be cautious of news that doesn't share who is reporting it.



Check the date

Look for a publishing date and see if it is current. Outdated articles can be misleading and irrelevant to current events.



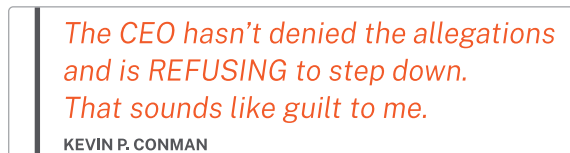
Check for a match

Read past the headline and see if the content matches. Be cautious of over-the-top headlines crafted to make you feel strong emotions.



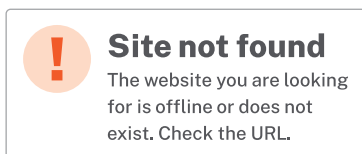
Check for facts

Consider how the author presents the information. Is the content made up of facts or opinions? Are the arguments clear and supported by evidence? Do they address counter-arguments?



Check their sources

A credible website will cite their supporting sources and provide additional resources for greater understanding. Click them to make sure they work.



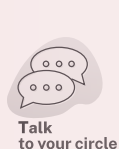
Check the sponsors

Quality sponsors often do their homework, and don't sponsor questionable sites just for clicks. A way to judge authenticity of a site is by seeing who chooses to sponsor them.



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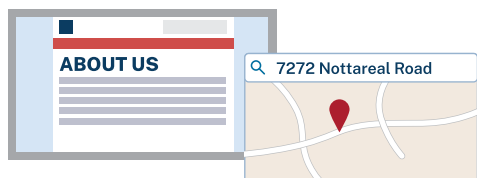
Investigate the Issue

Search for other reliable sources before sharing.

Before sharing a controversial or emotionally charged article, post, tweet or meme you read, take a few moments to investigate the issue to ensure you are not amplifying disinformation. Here are a few simple questions to ask when investigating an issue.

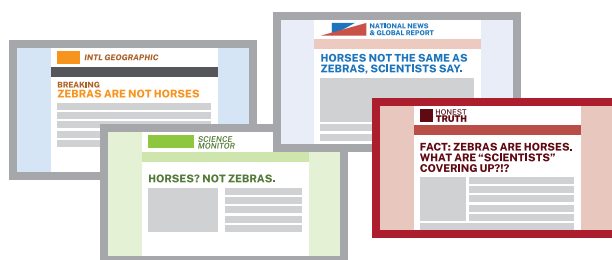
What is the source?

Take a second to investigate the site's "About" page to determine its goals and approach. You can also check for legitimate contact information.



Does it match other outlets?

Search for other legitimate sites covering the issue. Do the facts from the other sides line up?



Are the sources reliable?

Click on the sources to determine if they support the story and are legitimate.



Site not found

The website you are looking for is offline or does not exist. Check the URL.

Is the author credible?

Do a quick search on the author to see if they are credible.



Did the content push your buttons?

Did the content make you angry or push other emotional buttons? If so, consider the purpose of the post may have been to get you to respond emotionally before checking to see if the content was even true.



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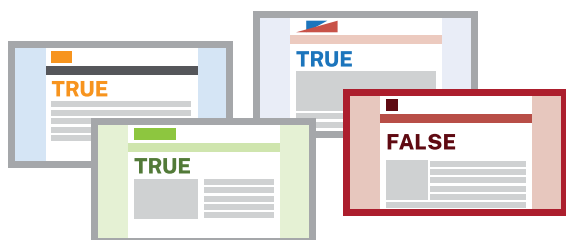
Think Before You Link

Ask yourself why you're sharing—and let your emotions cool.

Headlines and memes provoke passionate responses and serve as calls to action. In the moment, it can feel necessary or righteous to share the content. Foreign adversaries know this. They count on you spreading their content, exposing your friends and family, and widening their disinformation network. You can help break this cycle. Next time you read a provocative headline, take a moment to investigate its source and content before sharing it with others.

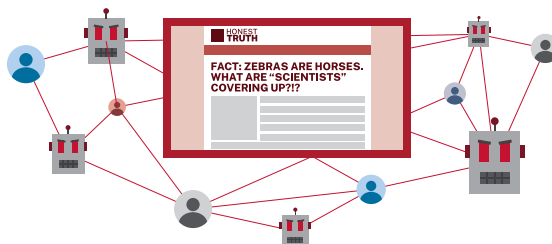
Know the content

Beyond the headline or caption, what is the underlying message? Make sure you know if the content you are sharing is a fact, an opinion, out of context, or a lie. Verify the information by checking it against trusted news outlets or primary sources.



Know the source

Foreign adversaries create fake websites that produce lots of content in little time, and fake accounts to share the content and make it appear popular and legitimate. Before you amplify a false message by sharing it with your followers, find out where the initial information comes from.



Know the reason

Content can appear in your feed for many reasons. Before you share content, understand if you have been specifically targeted to see the information, and if so, ask why. If it was shared by a friend, make sure you trust the original source as much as the friend.



Know yourself

Adversaries create content that feels true on an emotional level. This causes people to share content even when they know it to be hateful or untrue. Ask yourself why you are sharing something. Consider using your own words rather than forwarding potential disinformation. Do not let yourself be emotionally manipulated.

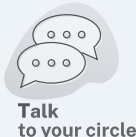
What's on your mind?



SHARE

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Talk to Your Circle

Talk with your social circle about the risks of spreading disinformation.

Spread the word about the risks of sharing disinformation.

It is probably not worth engaging with every piece of disinformation you run into online, but if you are concerned with its spread you may want to speak out. Here are some tips for talking to your friends and family.

Come prepared

Make sure you've done your homework and have the facts. Even if you're sure you're right, brush up on the latest evidence before having the conversation.



Decide if it's worth it

Once you have the facts, decide if the post is even worth weighing in on. Will your response help the conversation or cause more conflict?



Respond privately

If you decide to respond, try to take the conversation into a private space or even offline. Discussions held in comment sections or publicly on social media can become dramatic when there's an audience. A more private setting could lead to a more constructive conversation.



Focus on the facts

If you do respond publicly, replace false information with a correct statement. For example, if someone says the "sky is green," rather than saying "the sky is not green," say "the sky is blue." Repeating a false claim, even when debunking it, only amplifies it.



Share your knowledge

Share what you know about the risks of spreading disinformation and how you handle it.



Listen to others

Make sure the person you're speaking with feels heard and understood. This will increase the likelihood that you will be heard in return. Try to uncover why they are sharing a particular piece of misinformation. How does it support their views and beliefs?



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