

B1 TEENS

Fake News or Real?

Evaluating information, spotting misinformation and reporting what others say

B1 Intermediate | Reading | Grammar | 40 min

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Lesson Objectives

- [ok] Read a text about fake news, misinformation and media literacy
- [ok] Learn vocabulary related to news, sources and critical thinking
- [ok] Use reported speech to describe what others said or claimed
- [ok] Distinguish between direct speech and reported speech
- [ok] Discuss how to identify reliable and unreliable information
- [ok] Write a short report summarising different opinions

1 Before You Read

- > Have you ever believed something online that turned out to be false?
- > How do you decide if a news story is true or fake?
- > Do you think social media makes fake news more or less of a problem?

2 Reading: Don't Believe Everything You Read

Don't Believe Everything You Read

In 2023, a news story went viral claiming that a famous pop star had been replaced by a robot clone. Millions of people shared it. The headline was dramatic, the photos looked convincing, and within hours, it was trending worldwide. There was just one problem: it was completely made up.

Fake news is not new, but the internet has made it faster and harder to control. A study by MIT found that false stories spread six times faster than true ones on social media. Researchers said that this was because fake news often triggers strong emotions like shock, fear, or anger.

"People share articles without reading past the headline," explained media expert Dr. Amira Hassan. She added that many people didn't check where the information came from. "If a story makes you feel a strong emotion immediately, that's actually a warning sign," she warned.

So how can you spot fake news? Experts suggest several strategies. First, check the source -- is it a well-known, trusted news organisation? Second, look for the same story on other reliable websites. Third, check the date -- old stories are sometimes shared again to mislead people. Finally, read beyond the headline -- the full article often tells a different story.

Teacher and fact-checker Marco Bianchi told his students that the most important skill in the digital age was critical thinking. He said that being able to question information was more valuable than memorising facts. "I always tell my students to ask three questions: Who wrote this? Why did they write it? And where is the evidence?"

In a world full of information, the ability to separate fact from fiction isn't just useful -- it's essential.

3 Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Example
fake news	false information presented as real news	"Social media is full of fake news."
go viral	to spread very quickly online	"The video went viral overnight."
headline	the title of a news article	"The headline was shocking but misleading."
convincing	making you believe something is true	"The fake photo was very convincing."
trending	being widely discussed online	"The topic was trending on social media."
made up	invented; not true	"The whole story was made up."
spread	to reach more and more people	"False information spreads quickly online."
trigger	to cause a reaction or emotion	"Fake news triggers strong emotions."

Word	Definition	Example
source	where information comes from	"Always check the source of a story."
reliable	able to be trusted; dependable	"The BBC is a reliable news source."
mislead	to cause someone to believe something false	"The article was designed to mislead."
evidence	facts that prove something	"There was no evidence for the claim."
critical thinking	analysing and evaluating information carefully	"Schools should teach critical thinking."
fact-checker	person who verifies information	"Fact-checkers confirmed it was false."
claim	to state something is true, often without proof	"He claimed the earth was flat."
verify	to check if something is true	"Verify the facts before sharing."

Useful Collocations: go viral • spread misinformation • check the source • reliable source • fact-check a story • trigger emotions • critical thinking skills • beyond the headline

4 Grammar: Reported Speech (Statements)

In the Text, You Saw...

Direct Speech: "People share articles without reading past the headline," explained Dr. Hassan.

Reported Speech: She added that many people didn't check where the information came from.

Reported Speech: He said that being able to question information was more valuable than memorising facts.

Direct Speech	Reported Speech	Change
"I check every source."	He said he checked every source.	present simple -> past simple
"I am reading the article."	She said she was reading the article.	present cont. -> past cont.
"I have verified the facts."	He said he had verified the facts.	present perfect -> past perfect
"I will share this."	She said she would share it.	will -> would
"I can spot fake news."	He said he could spot fake news.	can -> could

Reporting Verbs

said / told: She said (that) the story was false. / She told me (that) the story was false.

explained / added: He explained that fake news spreads fast. She added that people rarely check sources.

warned / claimed: She warned that strong emotions were a sign. He claimed that the photo was real.

Common Mistakes

~~He said me that it was fake.~~ --> **He told me that it was fake.** (said + that / told + person + that)

~~She said that she can help.~~ --> **She said that she could help.** (can -> could)

~~He told that it was true.~~ --> **He said that it was true.** (told needs object: told me/us)

5 Match the Halves

#	Direct Speech	Reported Speech
1	"I read the news every day."	He said he read the news every day.
2	"We are investigating the story."	They said they were investigating the story.
3	"I have checked the source."	She said she had checked the source.
4	"This article will go viral."	He said the article would go viral.
5	"I can tell it's fake."	She said she could tell it was fake.
6	"We don't trust that website."	They said they didn't trust that website.
7	"I am writing a fact-check report."	He said he was writing a fact-check report.
8	"The headline is misleading."	She said the headline was misleading.
9	"I will verify the information."	He said he would verify the information.
10	"People must think critically."	She said people had to think critically.

6 Comprehension Quiz

1. What was the fake story about in 2023?

Answer: A pop star being replaced by a robot

2. According to MIT, false stories spread...

Answer: Six times faster than true ones

3. Dr. Hassan said a strong emotional reaction is...

Answer: A warning sign

4. Marco Bianchi said the most important skill is...

Answer: Critical thinking

5. "She said she could spot fake news." -- Original?

Answer: "I can spot fake news."

6. Correct reported speech for "I will check the source"?

Answer: He said he would check the source.

7. "He told me that..." -- Which is correct?

Answer: He told me that the story was false.

8. Which is NOT a way to spot fake news in the text?

Answer: Count the number of shares

7 Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: said | told | was | had checked | could | would | explained | warned

1. She _____ that the story was completely false.

2. He _____ me that I should always verify information.

3. The teacher _____ that fake news spreads faster than real news.

4. She said she _____ the source before sharing.

5. He claimed that the photo _____ real.

6. Dr. Hassan _____ that strong emotions were a red flag.

7. She said she _____ tell the difference between real and fake news.

8. He said he _____ write a fact-check report.

Answers: 1. said | 2. told | 3. explained | 4. had checked | 5. was | 6. warned | 7. could | 8. would

8 Speaking & Writing

Discussion Questions

Have you ever shared something online that turned out to be fake?

Should social media companies be responsible for stopping fake news?

Do you think schools should teach media literacy?

Is it ever acceptable to share news without checking if it's true first?

Who do you trust most for news -- TV, newspapers, social media, or friends?

Example Dialogue

A: Did you see that article about a new planet being discovered?

B: Yeah, but I checked and the source wasn't reliable. The scientist they quoted said he had never made that claim.

A: Really? My friend told me it was true. She said she had read it on three different websites.

B: That doesn't mean it's real. Dr. Hassan explained that fake stories spread faster because they trigger emotions.

A: You're right. I should have checked the source before I believed it.

Writing Task

Write 80-120 words about ONE of these topics. Use at least 4 examples of reported speech (said, told, explained, warned, claimed, added):

Option A: Interview two classmates about their news habits. Write a short report: "X said that... Y told me that..."

Option B: Summarise the opinions in the reading text using reported speech. What did each expert say?

9 Fake or Real? -- The Game

This interactive game is available in the online version. Read 10 headlines and decide if each is REAL or FAKE news. Score 7/10 or higher to win!

#	Headline	Answer
1	Scientists Discover New Species of Whale in the Arctic Ocean	REAL

#	Headline	Answer
2	Government Plans to Ban Homework for All Students Under 16	FAKE
3	Study Finds Teenagers Sleep Better Without Phones in the Bedroom	REAL
4	AI Robot Passes University Exam and Gets a Law Degree	FAKE
5	Japan Opens New Bullet Train Line Connecting Tokyo to Osaka in 67 Minutes	REAL
6	Eating Chocolate Every Day Cures Depression, New Study Claims	FAKE
7	UNESCO Adds New Sites to World Heritage List	REAL
8	Famous YouTuber Secretly Buys an Entire Island for \$2	FAKE
9	Microplastics Found in Bottled Water Sold in Supermarkets	REAL
10	New Law Requires Cats to Wear Identification Collars in France	FAKE

10

Review Checklist

- [ok] I can understand a text about fake news and media literacy
- [ok] I can use vocabulary related to news, sources and critical thinking
- [ok] I can change direct speech into reported speech
- [ok] I can use reporting verbs: said, told, explained, warned, claimed
- [ok] I know the tense changes in reported speech
- [ok] I can discuss how to spot fake news and write a summary using reported speech

Congratulations!

You have completed this lesson: Fake News or Real?