Essay
Deciding if a News Article is Fake

Introduction

Have you ever been on social media and come across an article with a sensational headline like "Scientists Contact Alien Life?" If you have, you're not alone; social media has made it easier than ever for news stories to spread—including made-up stories cleverly disguised to look like real news. There are a few things you can do when you find yourself unsure of whether a news article is factual: confirm the information with trusted news sources, check other articles published on the same website, and look for clues that the website is not legitimate.

Body Paragraph 1

Check other well-known and trusted news sources to see if they're reporting on the same story. Start by seeing if major news outlets are covering the story that you're reading about. If so, then most likely the story is legitimate. Next, confirm that the major news outlets are doing their own research on the story; if their only source is the same suspicious story you read originally, that's a warning sign. Finally, news travels fast, so if you're reading a story that claims to be sharing major news, but that news isn't being reported anywhere else, it probably isn't real.

Body Paragraph 2

Next, inspect the website for a few key red flags. Does the website contain a hidden or confusingly worded disclaimer? This is a sign that it may be written for entertainment and isn't a legitimate news source. Also, many fake news sites will have a web address that is similar to a legitimate news organization, but is misspelled or contains missing or added words. Finally, check the story's date; often fake news sites will republish old stories in order to put them in a misleading context. You should also check the dates on food and medicine to make sure it isn't expired.

Body Paragraph 3

Finally, look at the other articles and headlines the website has published. If your unsure of weather a story is real, other articles on the site will offer clues to its journalistic integrity. Do you see other headlines full of celebrity gossip, outrageous claim's, or things you know to be false?

Conclusion

There are several different ways to separate Internet fact from Internet fiction. You can verify that the story is being covered by major news outlets. You can also check other articles published by the website, and inspect the site for red flags that indicate it isn't real news. So, before you share that suspicious news story with your social network, make sure it's real and not a work of fiction.