

Title: We interrupt this program for an important message: The origin of Shills

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Today has been a bit slow so I thought it would be fun to look into the history of a word that gets thrown around a lot, Shills! Hope you Enjoy!

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A **shill**, also called a **plant** or a **stooge** (why aren't we using this more?!?!), is a person who publicly helps or gives credibility to a person or organization without disclosing that they have a close relationship with the person or organization.

Shills can carry out their operations in the areas of media, journalism, marketing, politics, sports, confidence games, or other business areas. A shill may also act to **discredit opponents or critics of the person or organization** in which they have a vested interest through character assassination or other means.

----- Origin

The origin of the term "shill" is uncertain; it may be an abbreviation of **shillaber**. The word originally denoted a **carnival worker** who pretended to be a member of the audience in an attempt to elicit interest in an attraction.

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----- Types

-----Internet:

In online discussion media, satisfied customers or supposedly innocent parties may express specific opinions in order to further the interests of an organization in which they have an interest, such as a commercial vendor, special interest group or perhaps a stock ;). In academia, this is called **opinion spamming**.

For example, an employee of a company that produces a specific product might praise the product anonymously in a discussion forum or group in order to generate interest in that product, service, or group. **In addition, some shills use "sock puppetry", where they sign on as one user soliciting recommendations for a specific product or service. They then sign on as a different user pretending to be a satisfied customer of a specific company (Something we have NEVERRR seen on Reddit....).**

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----- Media

The term can apply to journalists, commentators, and media outlets, who have vested interests in or associations with parties, and report in a way favorable to those interests. The term is often used by anti-establishment figures to denounce the media.

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****-----Gambling:****

Both the illegal and legal gambling industries often use ****skills** to make winning at games appear more likely than it actually is.

For example, illegal three-card monte and shell-game peddlers are notorious employers of skills. These skills also often aid in cheating, disrupting the game if the ***mark*** is likely to win.

In a legal casino, however, a skill is sometimes a gambler who plays using the casino's money in order to keep games (especially poker) going when there are not enough players.

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****-----Marketing:****

Skills are often employed to assume the air of satisfied customers and give testimonials to the merits of a given product. This type of shilling is illegal in some jurisdictions, but almost impossible to detect. be ware of sites where all the reviews are 5 stars...

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****-----Auctions:****

People who drive prices in favor of the auctioneer with fake bids in an auction are called ***skills*** or ***potted plants*** and seek to provoke a bidding war among other participants.

Often they are told by the seller precisely how high to bid, as the seller actually pays the price (to themselves) if the item does not sell, losing only the auction fees.

Shilling has a substantially higher rate of occurrence in online auctions, where any user with multiple accounts can bid on their own items. eBay forbids shilling; its rules do not allow friends or employees of a person selling an item to bid on the item, even though eBay has no means to detect if a bidder is related to a seller or is in fact the seller.

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****----- Legality of Shilling****

Shilling is illegal in many circumstances and in many jurisdictions because of the potential for fraud and

damage; however, if a shill does not place uninformed parties at a risk of loss, but merely generates "buzz", the shill's actions may be legal **** (not the case for GME) ****. For example, a person planted in an audience to laugh and applaud when desired, or to participate in on-stage activities as a "random member of the audience", is a legal type of shill.

Specifically online shilling, in some jurisdictions and circumstances, is illegal. The plastic surgery company Lifestyle Lift ordered their employees to post fake positive reviews on websites. As a result, they were sued, and ordered to pay \$300,000 in damages by the New York Attorney General's office.

****----- How to determine if someone is a 'shill' on Reddit****

Not every negative post against a DD is a shill (but it seems like they mostly are :P) If you are in doubt about the honest intentions of the post, make sure you do the following:

1. Check out their profile. How long has it been around? How much karma do they have? Where have they been posting? Even if it is an old account, check to see if there has been any other recent activity.
2. Read their other posts. Do they actually post or just comment negatively to everything? do they give any evidence to their statements or just SPAM IN ALL CAPS?
3. If you suspect someone is a 'shill' call them out on it and see what evidence they give (if any)
4. Once you have determined it truly is a shill, click the 'report' button next to their comment