

- **Goal:** discuss how to fact-check news stories
- **Language focus:** ways of modifying adjectives
- **Vocabulary:** the news and reporting



Reading

1 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- Do you think it's important to check the news regularly?
- Where do you usually get your news from?

2 Read the article about fake news and match headings a–e with paragraphs 1–5.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| a The wrong image | d Check your source |
| b A cause for concern | e + fake |
| c Looking elsewhere | |

FAKE NEWS!

1 _____

'Fake news' is a term commonly used by both politicians and ordinary people alike that is directed at any news stories slanted in a way that goes against their opinion. But fake news is a real thing, and something to be concerned about. A 2018 study into the spread of true and false news online discovered the **rather alarming** fact that true stories took six times longer to spread than false ones, and that fake stories in the study were 70% more likely to be shared. So how can we fact-check what we read?

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One **really useful** thing you can do to prevent yourself falling for a fake story is to check precisely where it has come from. The very first thing to look at when you see an unusual story is the URL or web address of the site it's been shared from. While our first impressions of what the address sounds like can give us a vital clue as to its credibility, we can also look it up on a list. Melissa Zimdars, author of the book *Fake News: Understanding Media and Misinformation in the Digital Age*, has created a useful, open-source online list of untrustworthy websites, which includes categories such as 'conspiracy' and 'junksci' (junk science).

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It is **perfectly straightforward** to search the title of the suspect story and add the word 'fake' to the search. This often throws up a whole host of results which reveal that it was a hoax. Which brings us to the next measure – using fact-checking websites. A multitude of these exist online. These are invaluable resources as you know the stories they credit will have been verified professionally, and are not just **utterly ridiculous** inventions.

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One technique which has been used extensively to spread (sometimes **completely misleading** information is using a misrepresented photo. The originator of the story takes an image, then claims it shows something that it doesn't, though at first glance it seems **perfectly credible**. A reverse image search (where you search for stories using the image rather than words) can show the real source of the photo.

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A final practical fact-checking measure, once you think you've found a credible story, is to look for extra sources. Find at least two other sources stating the same claims, and you're likely to be able to claim it as fact.

3 Work in pairs and discuss the questions.

- Can you think of any recent news stories which turned out to have been false?
- What do you think of the fact-checking techniques outlined in the article? How do you think you might use them in the future?
- What are your most trusted news sources? Which sources are famous for being inaccurate or very biased?

Language focus

4 a Work in pairs. Look at the adverbs + adjectives in bold in the article in Exercise 2 then answer the question.

Is each adverb used with:

- only gradable adjectives (like, *good* or *hot*)?
- only ungradable adjectives (like *excellent* or *boiling*)?
- both?

b Read the language focus box and check your answers.

Ways of modifying adjectives

There are various ways we can modify adjectives using adverbs. The adverb we use depends on:

1 whether the adjective is gradable or ungradable. Some adverbs can only be used to modify gradable adjectives (e.g. *barely*, *bitterly*, *deeply*, *extremely*, *fairly*, *perfectly*, *rather*, *somewhat*, *seriously*, *very*)
*I'm **pretty hopeful** we'll meet the deadline.*

*The exam was **extremely difficult**.*

Some adverbs can only be used to modify ungradable adjectives (e.g. *absolutely*, *completely*, *essentially*, *nearly*, *totally*, *utterly*, *virtually*)

*This story is **utterly ridiculous**.*

*I was **absolutely terrified** throughout that film.*

Really, *pretty* and *quite* can be used with both gradable and ungradable adjectives.

However, with gradable adjectives *quite* means *fairly*, whereas with ungradable adjectives it means *absolutely*.

*The text was **quite difficult** to follow, but I managed it in the end.*

*The text was **quite impossible** to follow! I didn't understand a word!*

2 whether the adjective forms part of a collocation. Some modifying adverbs collocate with certain adjectives (e.g. *bitterly cold/disappointed*; *completely open/honest*; *deeply serious/sorry*; *perfectly capable/straightforward*; *seriously alarming/hurt*)

*It was **bitterly cold** outside this morning.*


*To be **completely honest**, I don't really like the idea.*

Vocabulary

8 Choose the correct alternatives.

- 1 Very few newspapers are *impartial/realistic*, although they all claim they offer an objective representation.
- 2 The press should never *open/disclose* sensitive information about ongoing police investigations.
- 3 There's too much sensationalism in the news at the moment. A lot of the stories we're seeing are full of *unsubstantiated/insubstantial* claims which only end up misrepresenting the facts.
- 4 I'm sure I could recognise fake *footage/filming* of a news event if I saw it on TV.
- 5 Many stories about politicians are full of personal attacks and character *murders/assassinations* from journalists with opposing views.
- 6 Creators of news want to find an angle to a story that people are interested in, even if it means *breaking/bending* the truth.
- 7 Most fake news posts are very *credible/creditable*, but some are just ridiculous.
- 8 Fake news posts and articles are usually just ludicrous publicity *actions/stunts*, they're not really dangerous.
- 9 A lot of what people call fake news could be true – it's just a question of *interpretation/interplay* of the facts.

9 Work in pairs. Discuss which of the statements in Exercise 8 you agree with. Give reasons.

 Go to page 168 or your app for more vocabulary and practice.

Speaking

PREPARE

10 3.6 Listen to Matt and Trina discussing a news story. Answer the questions.

- 1 What was the story about?
- 2 Why did Matt think it was real?
- 3 Why did Trina think it was fake at first?
- 4 Which of the fact-checking techniques in the article in Exercise 2 do they mention?

11 Turn to page 178 and read the news stories. Make notes on the following:

- your first impression (real or fake?) and why
- which techniques would be most suitable to fact-check the story

SPEAK

12 Work in pairs. Explain whether you think the stories are true or fake and why. Discuss what you think are the best techniques to fact-check each one.

5 a Look at sentences 1–5 and decide which words carry the most stress.

- 1 People are perfectly capable of working it out themselves.
- 2 They're deeply sorry for the distress they've caused you.
- 3 They were pretty annoyed with the press coverage.
- 4 It's utterly ridiculous, how could people believe it?
- 5 I'm fairly sure this is a fake.


b 3.5 Listen and check.

6 Choose the option which is NOT possible.

- 1 a You should speak to Sergio. He's deeply sorry for what he said to you.
b You should speak to Sergio. He's perfectly sorry for what he said to you.
c You should speak to Sergio. He's really sorry for what he said to you.
- 2 a Ugh, this tastes very awful!
b Ugh, this tastes absolutely awful!
c Ugh, this tastes quite awful!
- 3 a I'm bitterly disappointed with your behaviour.
b I'm somewhat disappointed with your behaviour.
c I'm nearly disappointed with your behaviour.
- 4 a This story seems fairly credible to me.
b This story seems perfectly credible to me.
c This story seems utterly credible to me.

7 Work in pairs. Think of an adjective for each of the adverbs in the language focus box which describes something in your life.

I was bitterly cold this morning.

 Go to page 150 or your app for more information and practice.

Master your
listening
page 98