

# Facebook and Fake News

Consider each of the below proposals, and fill in each of the below TODOs.

## Proposals

### Proposal 1

Facebook relies on an algorithm as well as individual users' reports to identify content that is potentially "fake news." Once the content has been identified, it is sent to third party fact-checkers for verification. If the content is verified as fake news, it is publicly flagged with a warning that the content is disputed by fact-checkers.



### Proposal 2

However, a designer at Facebook believes that there needs to be a different approach to content regulation. Their proposal is that content deemed problematic by third-party fact-checkers should be prevented from being shared on the platform altogether.

# Questions

1. Which form of content regulation, Proposal 1 or Proposal 2, do you feel is better? Why?
  - a. Ultimately, to battle the spread of misinformation on social media, I believe Proposal 2 is better in preserving the health and vitality of the democratic public sphere. Given social media's reach, the power of automation by bad actors, and partisan networks with a vested interest in potentially poisoning the information ecosystem, we must temper the absolute rights of expression and access against the need to protect discourse from noise and easily-disproved, bad faith nonsense injected into healthy and good-intended discussions.
2. Which form of content regulation, Proposal 1 or Proposal 2, do you think best preserves or promotes the [five rights and opportunities necessary for a democratic public sphere](#)?
  - a. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Rights? Why?
    - i. Proposal 1 best preserves or promotes Rights because spreading false information can most generously be categorized as a form of expression. Therefore, limiting an individual's opportunities to express whatever poorly held beliefs they have can be said to impinge on their absolute expression. Proposal 2 creates a barrier to sharing false information, even if that information is a dearly held belief. In order to surmount that barrier, users would need to restate their disputed beliefs in their own words, having been prevented from simply sharing it with their networks.
  - b. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Opportunity for Expression? Why?
    - i. I don't believe either proposal directly impinges on an individual's Opportunity for Expressions. Opponents may see Proposal 2 as censorship, but the proposal merely prevents you from forwarding along an expression that has already been deemed toxic or false. Spreading someone else's expression is different from expressing something yourself.
  - c. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Access? Why?
    - i. Proposal 2 better preserves and promotes Access. That may surprise you to read; however, once something is posted, even under Proposal 2, it is available where it is posted. If you make the effort to seek out the information, you will find it on its initial page. Furthermore, the Access clause states "[e]ffective participation in decision making on public matters requires being informed." I agree. Being informed is paramount to the good and health of a democratic society. Being *misinformed* is poison. Allowing the spread of false information poisons democratic debate and obstructs public forums with toxic lies that can easily be mitigated. Allowing misinformation to spread hinders Access.
  - d. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Diversity? Why?
    - i. Again, Proposal 2 is better suited to preserving and promoting Diversity. As with Access, the key here is the destructive role *known falsehoods* play in forming an "informed and reasoned position." It is important to hear from a spectrum of voices, but the *quality* of those voices must be held to the standard of definable truth. If something is easily, demonstrably false, it does not serve to inform but to misinform.
  - e. Which proposal best preserves or promotes Communicative Power? Why?
    - i. Proposal 1, being a bit of a communicative free for all, best promotes Communicative Power. It would be easier to stumble upon a view that conflicts with the mainstream, though it would also be easier to construct ill-informed views based on erroneous information.