

# How to spot disinformation: The red flags to look out for!



**Research shows that learning what disinformation looks like is one of the best ways to stop it from spreading.**

Check out these common red flags that indicate the content you're viewing may be disinformation and some simple tips on how to counter them:

## **Red flag: Impersonation**

A bad actor may impersonate a trusted source or create a convincing fake source to spread disinformation. Because we're exposed to thousands of messages and ads daily it can be tricky to spot impersonation.

### **How to counter it:**

Double-check if the info you're getting is from an official account. Don't trust an unfamiliar source even if it seems trustworthy, double-check the info with a source you know and trust.

## **Red flag: Cherry-picking information**

Bad actors cherry-pick data that appears to confirm one position while ignoring other data that contradicts it. This can be very misleading, distorting reality through a narrow lens to support a specific view.

### **How to counter it:**

Be cautious with sources that skip over details or dissenting views. Ask yourself: "What's being left out?" Consider the full picture and explore diverse sources for a clearer perspective.

## **Red flag: Overly emotional content**

Content that draws out a strong emotional reaction like fear or anger can hinder our ability to assess the quality of information. Bad actors may use this to trick us into sharing disinformation.

### **How to counter it:**

When content provokes a strong emotional reaction in you, pause and take a breather before re-evaluating the news. Consider the language used by the source and whether it seems deliberately designed to make you feel a certain way.

## **Red flag: Discrediting opponents**

Discrediting their opponents helps bad actors deflect our attention and scrutiny away from flaws in their arguments, or the disinformation they spread.

### **How to counter it:**

Firstly, when you see content that attacks a group or individual, ask yourself what is motivating the author. Are they more interested in reporting information or smearing a target? Secondly, double-check if the claims are accurate.

## **Red flag: Conspiracy theories**

Conspiracy theories are a powerful disinformation tool. They cast doubt over facts and encourage conspiratorial thinking that pushes public discussions away from those facts.

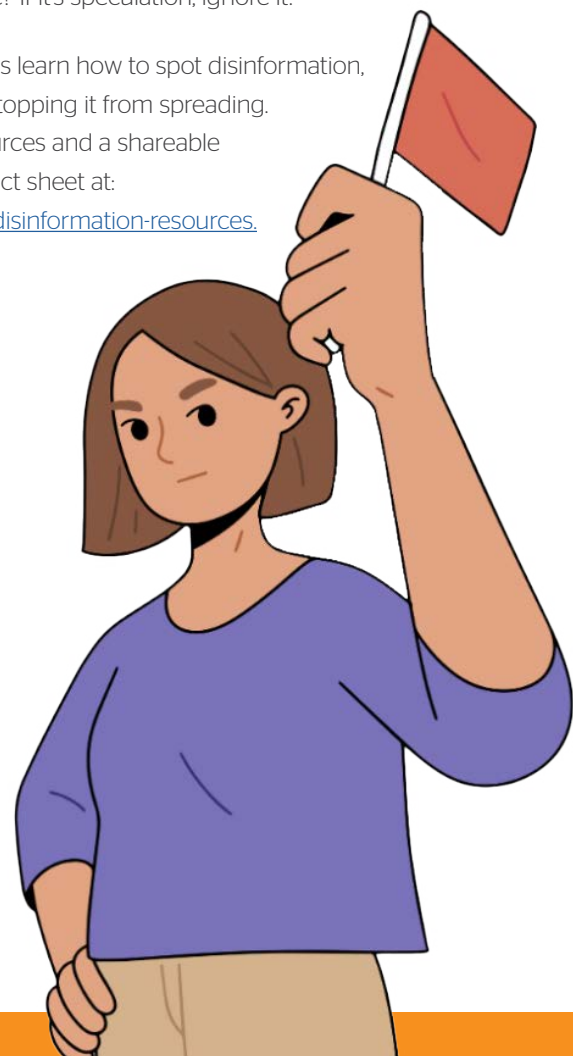
### **How to counter it:**

Conspiracy theories thrive on speculation. Ask yourself if the content you're viewing is evidence-backed or prompting you to speculate? If it's speculation, ignore it.

When more of us learn how to spot disinformation, we're better at stopping it from spreading.

Find more resources and a shareable version of this fact sheet at:

[www.acf.org.au/disinformation-resources](http://www.acf.org.au/disinformation-resources).



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