YOUNG FACT-CHECKER TOOLKIT



SOURCE

Who shared the information and where was it published?

CONTEXT

What is the complete background and story behind the claim?

EVIDENCE

What reliable proof supports it?

CROSS-CHECK

Do other credible and independent sources verify the same information?

FACTS BEFORE FEELINGS

Verify the facts before getting carried away by hype or strong emotions.



You should analyze what are you looking at!

POLSKO-UKRAIŃSKA RADA WYMIANY MŁODZIEŻY

Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej

Projekt został sfinansowany ze środków Polsko-Ukraińskiej Rady Wymiany Młodzieży z dotacji MEN

YOUNG FACT-CHECKER TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION



What's the goal of this toolkit?

In today's digital world, information can spread very quickly. Social media often promotes content that gets many views, likes, and shares, but popular information is not always true or accurate.

This toolkit gives you practical strategies to identify misleading information, distorted data, and AI-manipulated content, such as deepfakes. You will learn how to check different sources, verify information step by step, and decide what you can trust online.

By practising these methods, you will develop critical-thinking skills and become more confident when using online information.

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THIS IS YOUR ROAD TO GO

Is it true?

Useful Vocabulary

Manipulation Cases

Data Manipulation

Deepfake

How to recognize deepfakes



Vertical vs Lateral Reading

5 steps to analyze information

Red flags

Sources to fact-check



Educational sources

Conclusion

IS IT TRUE?

Study Shows Benefits Of Skin-To-Skin Contact Between New Players and Coaches





IS IT TRUE?

There is no real scientific evidence that skin-to-skin contact between new players and coaches is helpful. This claim changes or makes up research results. It may be used to make inappropriate physical contact seem normal, safe, or good for your health.





IS IT TRUE?

NASA WARNS: PLASMA FROM THE SUN WILL MELT ROCKS ON EARTH! EXPERTS CONFIRM THE PLANET'S COLLAPSE



IS IT TRUE?

NASA never claimed that solar energy will melt rocks or destroy Earth. Space storms can cause problems with satellites, radio signals, and electricity. However, Earth’s atmosphere and magnetic field help protect us on the ground. The rumor makes real space weather sound much more dangerous and creates a fake disaster story.





IS IT TRUE?

On May 31, 2024, the Polish Press Agency (PAP) reported that Prime Minister Donald Tusk was quoted as saying:

“On July 1, 2024, Poland will start a partial military mobilization. 200,000 Polish people, including former soldiers and ordinary civilians, will have to join the military. All of them will be sent to Ukraine.”





IS IT TRUE?

The story that Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk ordered 200,000 people to join the military from July 1, 2024, and go to Ukraine is completely false. The story was made up and illegally posted on the Polish Press Agency (PAP) website during a cyberattack on May 31, 2024. Neither Donald Tusk nor the Polish government announced such plans. This means the claim is false information (disinformation) created to mislead people.



IS IT TRUE?

A professional cornhole player who is a quadruple amputee has been arrested in connection with a fatal shooting.



IS IT TRUE?

Dayton Webber, a 27-year-old professional cornhole player who lost all four limbs, was arrested after a deadly shooting in Maryland on March 22, 2026. Police say 27-year-old Bradrick Wells was shot and killed during a fight inside Webber's car. Webber left the area and was later caught by police in Virginia. He was charged with first-degree murder, but his lawyers say he was acting in self-defense.



USEFUL VOCABULARY

Deepfake: is fake video, audio, or an image created with artificial intelligence (AI). AI can change a person's face, copy their voice, or make it look and sound like they did or said something that never really happened.

Clickbait: is online content or a headline made to get people to click on a link. It often uses shocking, exaggerated, or misleading information to attract attention.

Misinformation: is false or incorrect information that people share by mistake. They do not mean to trick or harm others.

Disinformation: is false or misleading information that is deliberately created and spread with the intent to manipulate and harm others.

Malinformation: is factual information that is taken out of context or manipulated to deliberately harm other people, damage a reputation or mislead an audience.



VOCABULARY

Propaganda: is information that tries to persuade people to think or act in a certain way. It does not always use lies or hide what it wants to achieve.

Bias means regularly favoring one side when choosing topics, words, or sources. It can happen on purpose or by accident, and it does not always mean the information is false.

Manipulation: is controlling people or situations for your own benefit. It is often hidden, unfair, or dishonest.

Fabrication: is completely making up facts, data, or sources for your own benefit. It is usually done in a hidden, unfair, or dishonest way.

Red flag: is a warning sign. You should be careful with information that has even one red flag, because more red flags mean it's less reliable.



Manipulation Cases

“There's no doubt about it. In five years, teachers won't be needed“

?

Explanation of manipulation

“There's no doubt about it. In five years, teachers won't be needed”

Saying “There’s no doubt about it” makes the speaker sound completely sure. It makes a personal opinion sound like a fact and makes it harder for people to question or discuss the claim.

Using the phrase “in five years” makes the claim sound exact and realistic, like a prediction from an expert. Five years feels close enough to make people worried, but it is also far enough away that the speaker may not be responsible if the prediction is wrong.

Saying that “teachers won’t be needed” makes education sound too simple. Learning is not only about getting information. Teachers also guide students, support them, help them solve problems, and teach important social skills.

Finally, the dramatic language creates strong emotions. It can make people feel shocked or afraid instead of thinking carefully about the claim. This type of language is common in clickbait, online hype, and advertisements for new technology.

Manipulation Cases

”Experts are warning against antibiotics”

?

Explanation of manipulation

“Experts are warning against antibiotics“

Using the word “experts” makes a message sound trustworthy, but it never mentions who they are. Without naming specific doctors, scientists, or hospitals, it is hard to check if the information is actually true.

Leaving out key details can change the whole meaning of a message. For example, claiming that experts are “warning against antibiotics” is misleading. Doctors actually warn people not to use antibiotics too often or for viral infections, because they cannot kill viruses. Without this context, helpful medical advice sounds like a total ban.

The word “warning” is used to make people feel afraid by connecting a common medicine with danger. This can make people panic instead of thinking calmly. This method is often used to get more clicks, make people worried, or sell health products that may not work.

Manipulation Cases

“The AI Model Went Out Of Control, and the Media is Staying Dead Silent. Why?”



Explanation of manipulation

“The AI Model Went Out Of Control, and the Media is Staying Dead Silent. Why?”

The phrase “went out of control” makes the story sound more dramatic. It makes AI seem like a person who decided to do something bad, even if it was only a technical problem or a software error.

Saying “the media is staying dead silent” makes people think there is a secret cover-up. It encourages conspiracy theories and makes readers believe they have found hidden information, even when the story is false.

Asking “Why?” is used to make people curious and keep reading. It can push people to believe extreme or false ideas and is often used to get more clicks, sell something, or spread misinformation.

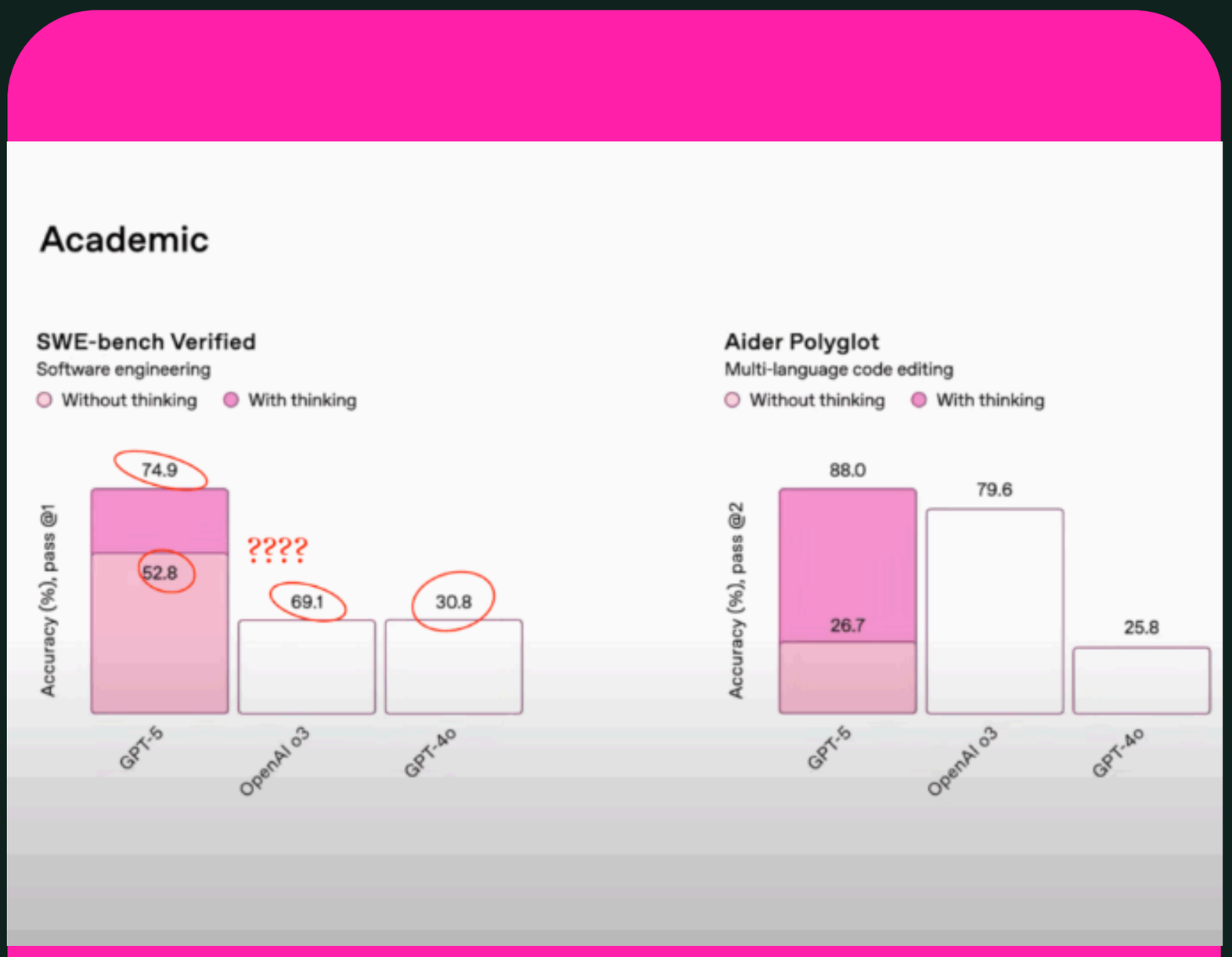
DATA MANIPULATION

Data manipulation in the media means using real numbers to give people the wrong impression. This happens when media use confusing charts, change the meaning of facts, or show only the statistics that support one side. The goal is to make people believe one point of view without creating fake data.





EXAMPLE OF DATA MANIPULATION

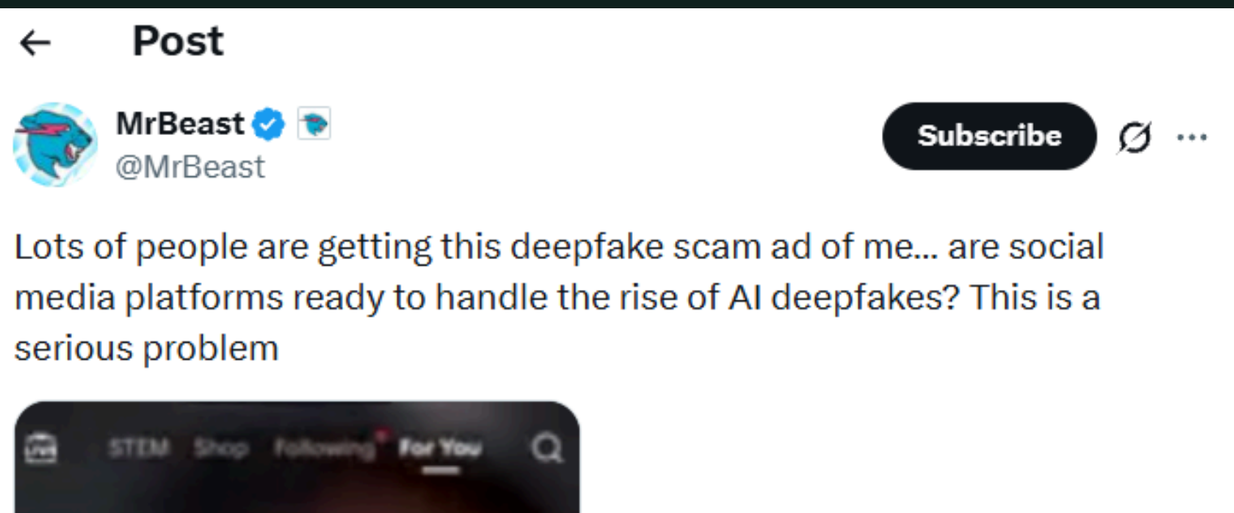




During a livestream, OpenAI presented charts to show that GPT-5 performs better than older models. The charts looked simple and clear, but the numbers shown did not match the height of the bars.

DEEPFAKE

EXAMPLE





In this video, scammers used MrBeast's popularity to trick viewers. They used AI deepfakes to copy his face and voice. They falsely said that he was giving away many iPhone 15 Pro Max phones. The video promised that anyone who clicked the link could get a new phone for just $2.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE DEEPFAKES

Look for facial details that seem strange, such as unusual reflections in the eyes, unnatural blinking, very smooth skin, or blurry teeth. Also, check around the face, hair, and glasses for flickering, strange shapes, or blurry edges.

Pay attention to the lighting and shadows. If the light on the face does not match the neck or the background, the video might be fake.

Listen closely to the voice and watch the person’s lips. AI voices can sound robotic, and the mouth movements may not match the spoken words.

Be careful with urgent or secret requests for money. If someone claims to be a family member, friend, or boss, hang up and call them back using a trusted number.

5 STEPS TO ANALYZE INFORMATION

Verify the Source

Find out who created, paid for, or published the content. Then, check their qualifications and see if they might be biased.

Trace the Evidence

Trace all statistics, quotes, and claims back to their original sources to make sure they are accurate.

Examine the Context

Check the publication date and make sure the information has not been edited, or changed from its original meaning.

Identify the Intent

Find out the main purpose behind the content. Check whether it is meant to share unbiased facts, convince you of something, sell a product, or trigger an emotional reaction.

Spot the Tactics

Watch out for manipulative tactics, such as playing on your emotions, making broad claims, or intentionally leaving out key facts.

VERTICAL VS LATERAL READING

Vertical reading means deciding if a website is trustworthy by looking only at the site itself, such as its design or “About Us” page. This habit is risky because unreliable websites can easily look polished and professional. Without checking outside sources, it is very difficult to spot/ recognize false information.

Lateral reading means checking if a website is trustworthy by leaving the page right away to look at outside sources. By opening other tabs to research the site’s background and reputation, This helps you avoid being fooled by a professional-looking website or simply believing what the website says about itself.

RED FLAGS

THINK TWICE!

A red flag is a warning sign. Information with even one red flag should be checked carefully, as additional flags further reduce its reliability.



1

No identifiable author





2

No original or verifiable source



3

Quotations presented without links or references

LOOK TWICE.
SHARE ONCE.

BE MINDFUL!

4

Quotes taken out of context

5

Numbers and statistics given without sufficient context



6

Outdated material presented as current information





7

Unclear sponsorship, funding, or potential conflicts of interest

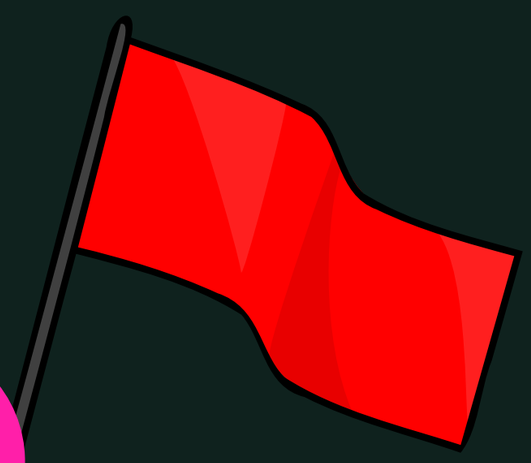
LOOK TWICE.
SHARE ONCE.

VERIFY PROPERLY!



8

Using strong emotions to make people feel afraid, angry, or that they must act quickly.



9

Extraordinary claims supported by only a single source



10

Repetition across many posts, but no independent confirmation





LOOK TWICE.
SHARE ONCE.

SOURCES TO FACT-CHECK*

Google Fact Check Explorer: A simple search tool that checks if a rumor is true or false. Just type in a claim, and it shows you the final verdict from experts.

Snopes: A great site to check viral memes, internet myths, and fake news. It clearly explains if a story is real, totally fake, or just a half-truth.

PolitiFact: A site that fact-checks politicians and leaders. It rates their statements on a simple scale, from completely true to a "Pants on Fire" lie.

Demagog: The biggest fact-checking site in Poland. It focuses on checking local news, busting online lies, and seeing if politicians are telling the truth.

SOURCES TO CHECK IMAGES

Google Lens / ***Google Images***: A quick tool to search using a picture instead of words. It finds matching photos and older posts, helping you find old pictures that are presented as new or breaking news.

TinEye: A powerful tool that tracks down edited pictures, even if they are filtered. Its "Sort by Oldest" button helps you find exactly where and when an image first appeared.

FotoForensics: A smart tool that helps you spot fake or edited pictures. It highlights uneven quality, making any photoshopped spots clearly glow or look different in texture.



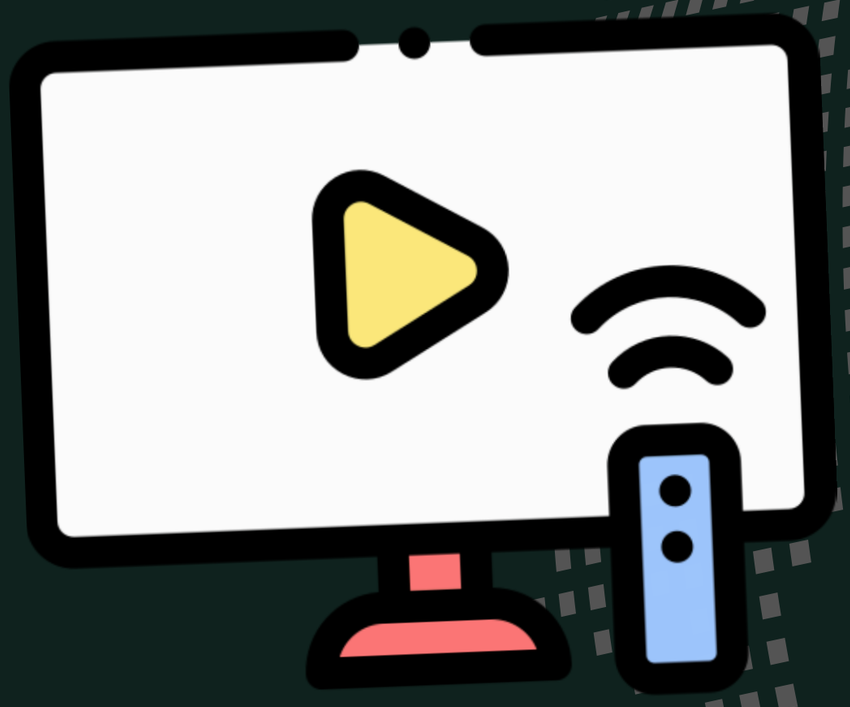


SOURCES TO CHECK

*VIDEOS

***InVID Verification Plugin*: A handy browser extension that splits videos into still pictures so you can easily search them online. It also includes tools to check hidden data and a magnifier to zoom in on tiny details like license plates.**

DuckDuckGoose: A smart tool designed to spot deepfakes and AI-edited videos. It checks how the face moves, the lighting, and if the lip movements match the voice to show you exactly where and when a video was digitally changed.





EDUCATIONAL SOURCES

The Truth in Journalism Fact-Checking Guide
A helpful guide that explains how to verify stories before they are published. It teaches you the strict process of making sure every detail in a text is completely true.

The Verification Handbook for Disinformation and Media Manipulation
A detailed book that gives you the tools to fight modern digital lies. It helps you investigate and spot deepfakes, fake news campaigns, and social media tricks.

Fact-Checking Fundamentals
A free online course that teaches the basics of checking information. You can take it at your own pace, making it a perfect starting point for beginners.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for reading all the way through to this final page! We hope this toolkit provides you with practical skills to spot data manipulation, detect AI deepfakes, and recognize misleading narratives online. By applying lateral reading, spotting red flags, and using dedicated verification tools to trace evidence back to its original source, you can protect yourself from being deceived by digital misinformation.

Keep these strategies in mind, stay critical, and remember the golden rule:

"Think critically, verify independently, share responsibly."





SOURCES USED

Page 7-8: “Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk” by gov.pl via *wikimedia commons*
Page 9-10: “Dayton Webber, then 18, pictured at a baseball game in 2016. In the years before his arrest, he shared his experience playing sports - and turning pro in one of them as a quadruple amputee.” by Kevin Sullivan/Digital First Media/Orange County Register via *Getty Images*
Page 20: “Chart about ChatGPT-5 efficiency” by OpenAI via *FLOWING DATA*
Page 30: Icon by *Magnific*

