Cheap fakes vs deepfakes

Video transcript

Vanessa: Hey everyone! I'm Vanessa. In this lesson we'll build on all the skills we've taught so far and use them to identify what's called deepfakes and cheap fakes. Deepfakes are videos that have been edited using an algorithm to replace the person in the video with someone else's face. To make it look like they said or did things they didn't actually do.

This video of Tom Cruise - deepfake. Did they reboot The Shining with Jim Carrey? No, deepfake. This horrifying video of Jennifer Lawrence with Steve Buscemi's face? Yeah that's a deepfake.

While all these are meant to be funny, when deepfakes first started popping up on social media, people were pretty concerned and worried how they might pose a threat to democracy. Fortunately, deepfakes haven't been our downfall... yet. But you should still know how to recognize a deepfake if you come across one in the wild. But to be clear, the technology is only getting better so these tips aren't foolproof.

To start, I always look at the teeth. They might be a little blurred out. Blotchy skin tones. The technology has to use so many reference photos to create a realistic deepfake. So, the skin might not always look consistent. If they aren't blinking in the video, that might be a clue. Awkward or unnatural facial expressions. Like if the facial expression doesn't match the tone of what they're saying. And weird hair, deepfakes have a hard time replicating hair. So you won't see things like frizz or flyaways.

There are some tools that are starting to pop up to help identify deepfakes. One that I've been using lately is called Deepware. You can either upload the video or drop in the link and Deepware will let you know if it detects a deepfake. Plus gives you a percentage for how confident it is. But the best tip for identifying deepfakes is to just be skeptical. If you see a video of someone doing something way out of character, use those three questions from SHEG. As I mentioned, deepfakes didn't pose as big a threat as fact checkers thought they would. Instead the main thing you should be looking out for on your timeline are cheap fakes.

Cheap fakes are lower quality photos and videos that have been manipulated using cheaper, more low effort editing software. Cheap fakes can also edit out important context or maybe reorder clips to alter the narrative to deceive you and shape your opinion, which makes them a lot more worrisome on social media than deepfakes. For example, take a look at this video showing environmental activist Greta Thunberg that was created and shared on social media.

Video clip of the claim: So, uh, I would just tell him to, to tell the situation as it is since the climate crisis doesn't exist, how can we expect people to want climate action. That's the fair point. [Repeated three times] Since the climate crisis doesn't exist...

Vanessa: Wow the person who made that really thought they did something there. But this is a good example that shows just how easy it is to pull an out of context clip and create misinformation around it. To fact check this, I did a keyword search using the exact quote to try to find the original source and here's the full portion of that interview with MSNBC.

Original video clip: What we need now is to raise awareness and to create public opinion to treat the crisis like a crisis because if people are not aware of the crisis that we face of course they won't put pressure on the elected leaders. So I would just tell him to tell the situation as it is. Because, I mean, yes, you could say I meet with a lot of world leaders and they say I can't do anything because I don't have the support from voters. Well, how can you expect support and pressure from voters if you are not treating the crisis like a crisis. Since the climate crisis doesn't exist how can we expect people to want climate action?

Vanessa: So Greta isn't saying that the climate crisis doesn't exist, she said that voters won't take it seriously if they don't believe it exists. It's all about context people! Cheap fakes, like pretty much all misinformation, are created to play on your emotions. They are designed to get a rise out of you so before you share impulsively, pause and take the time to look into it.