

Verifying photos and videos

Video transcript

Loren: Hey, everyone! It's Loren and in this lesson we're going to focus on fact checking viral photos and videos. Now sometimes the photos you see online are straight up digitally manipulated. Photoshopped, or edited, but most of the time, when we classify an image as misinformation, it's because it's either outdated or used in the completely wrong context. Fortunately, there are plenty of really easy and free tools that you can use to fact check these kinds of claims. It just comes down to remembering to use them before you share. Let's take a look at this photo which went viral following the 2021 winter storm in Texas, which brought record low temperatures and caused widespread power outages.

It says, "a helicopter running on fossil fuel spraying a chemical made from fossil fuels onto a wind turbine made with fossil fuels during an ice storm is awesome." To fact-check it, we're just going to do a quick reverse Google image search.

Doing this we'll be able to tell if the photo is real, if the helicopter was somehow digitally added to the photo, or if it's just being taken out of context. I took a screenshot of the image since we don't want the text to influence our results and went to images.google.com. Uploading the photo will bring up all the instances where this exact photo exists online.

One of the results the search brought up was this article from the Associated Press, which reported that this photo was taken in 2015 and in Sweden. And that the helicopter was spraying hot water, not chemicals. And despite this taking, what, 30 seconds to fact check this photo was shared super widely across social media. It also helped spread the false claim shared by politicians that renewable energy sources were to blame for the blackouts. They weren't, embarrassing...

Let's try another. Take a look at this TikTok video which is problematic for a number of reasons.

TikTok video with music: The video shows a claim that a homemade drink can help with weight loss.

Loren: As we've mentioned multiple times now, the first question you want to ask yourself when fact-checking is who is behind the information? So let's do a reverse image search of this person's profile picture since you know... they look like a doctor to find out more about them. This time we'll do it on mobile using the Chrome app.

Hold down on the image until you get the pop-up to search Google for this image and go figure — it's actually just a stock picture of a woman with a stethoscope.

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Like, really? This unfortunately happens all the time. People will use stock images or sometimes photos of actual doctors and pair them with really bad medical advice to try to sell you something because they know seeing a person in a white coat tends to give them some credibility. This is so messed up and not to mention super dangerous. So remember if you see a photo and it seems a little off just take that time to image search it.

But let's move on to fact-checking videos since the process is really similar. If you ever see a clip you're curious about you can use the free chrome extension called fake news debunker by InVid and WeVerify to fact check it. We'll leave the link for this tool in the description. Basically all the extension does is pull still images from the video for you to then do a reverse image search with. Take a look at this video I found on YouTube which claims to be a trailer for Harry Potter and the Cursed Child.

YouTube video: I have some questions for you, professor. I know he's working under your orders. {end clip}

Loren: As it stands, I haven't heard any buzz about a new Harry Potter movie so that's red flag number one. But to be sure, let's fact-check the video. After you have the extension downloaded, you can tap the icon and click assistant for current page you'll then want to select the keyframes tool and it'll pull the best images to do a reverse Google image search. And clicking through the photos, it's pretty clear that the creator just spliced together a bunch of clips from the other movies. So while there might be another Harry Potter movie in the future — this one isn't it.