

Seven Steps for Staying Sharp Online

Tip #1

PAUSE.



Misinformation plays on your emotions. Don't let strong feelings like anger, fear and outrage guide your decisions about what to believe and share.

Tip: Be extra cautious during breaking news events. They generate a firehose of information that can be hard to follow as details emerge and attract a variety of bad actors who peddle sensational falsehoods.

Tip #2

MEMES AREN'T NEWS!



There are big differences among the different types of content that come across your social media feeds. Memes and social media posts created by complete strangers online are often inaccurate and misleading. Do not share anything you or experts cannot verify.

Tip #3

LIKES AND SHARES ≠ CREDIBILITY



Many people post things to try to rack up lots of likes and shares on social media, but just because something is popular or goes viral doesn't mean it's credible.

Tip #4

TAKE TIME TO ASSESS SOURCES.



When you see a social media post by a person or group you don't recognize, take a moment to check out their profile. Do they seem credible? Can you even tell where the content you're looking at came from? If not, don't believe it or spread it.

Tip #5

GET TO THE EXPERTS.



Today's information environment allows you to find and follow people with expertise in just about any subject. Remember: true experts tell you how they know what they know by citing strong evidence. They don't oversimplify complex trends and events, and they adjust their analyses in the face of new information.

Tip #6

DON'T FEED THE TROLLS.



Troll accounts on social media exist to provoke people, cause chaos, distort important issues and make focused, reasonable debate impossible. It's tempting to take them on, but that's exactly what they want: attention. Don't give it to them.

Tip #7

STEER CLEAR OF CONSPIRATORIAL THINKING.



Conspiracy theories offer people a simple explanation for complex and random events, but they lack concrete evidence, and rely on faulty logic and fear.



Tip: Remember that credible information doesn't ask you to trust it — it shows you why you should by clearly attributing the facts it provides to reliable sources.

This infographic was developed by the News Literacy Project with Cindy Otis, author of *True or False: A CIA Analyst's Guide to Spotting Fake News*.