



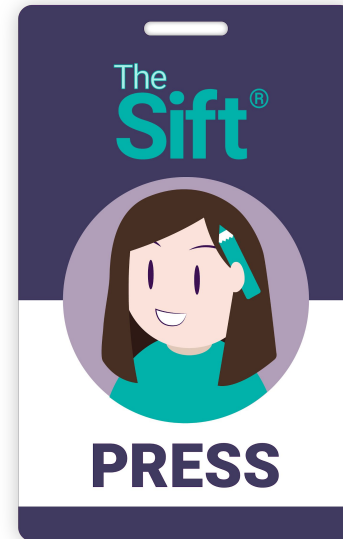
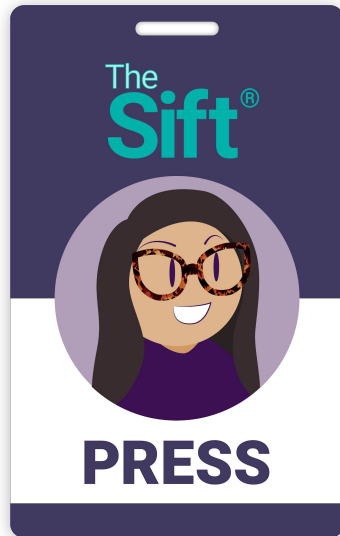
The Sift[®] News Goggles

Ad or news?

April 26, 2021

First things first

- Be sure to view these slides in presentation mode.
- Suzannah and Hannah, former reporters who work at NLP, are going to help you examine this topic through journalists' eyes.



When it comes to advertising, not everything online is as it first appears. Some ads, for example, are designed to look like news stories. To make things trickier, this kind of advertising has different names and is marked with different labels, including “sponsored content,” “native advertising,” “advertorial,” “paid post,” or hashtags such as #ad or #sponsored.

This week, let's use our news goggles to tell the difference between ads and news — even when they look alike!



Axios

Let's say you are scrolling for news on the Axios website and come across this post on your device ...

The screenshot shows the top of an Axios article. At the top is the Axios logo and a search icon. Below that is the NRECA logo and the text 'A message from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association'. The main headline is 'Nurturing energy innovation in rural communities'. Below the headline is a featured image with the text 'America's Electric Cooperatives', 'BUILDING COMMUNITY.', '#PowerOn', and the NRECA logo. The image shows a man in a green shirt and cap looking out a window.

Electric cooperatives are leading by managing the transition in the electric sector and engaging their members to introduce energy innovation to more communities.

Key numbers: U.S. cooperatives are energy providers and engines of economic [growth for 42 million](#)

What is it? Is it a news story? Advertising? Do you see any clues?



Here's the big clue: This is "A message from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association." Even though the Axios logo appears at the top and the larger font looks like a headline, this item was not written by Axios staff. It's an ad.

axios.com

AXIOS

A message from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Nurturing energy innovation in rural communities



Electric cooperatives are leading by managing the transition in the electric sector and engaging their members to introduce energy innovation to more communities.

Key numbers: U.S. cooperatives are energy providers and engines of economic [growth for 42 million](#)

Ad



A message from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Nurturing energy innovation in rural communities



Electric cooperatives are leading by managing the transition in the electric sector and engaging their members to introduce energy innovation to more communities.

Key numbers: U.S. cooperatives are energy providers and engines of economic [growth for 42 million](#)

News



Torey Van Oot, Nick Halter
5 hours ago - Axios Twin Cities

A city's catharsis



A view outside the Hennepin County Courthouse after yesterday's verdict. Photo: Stephen Maturen/Getty Images

Celebration and catharsis filled the streets of Minneapolis yesterday. After weeks on edge, many breathed a sigh of relief upon hearing Judge Peter Cahill read the sweep of guilty verdicts against Derek Chauvin.

What they're saying: "George Floyd isn't

For reference, here is an Axios news story. I'm struck by how similar these pieces are in appearance! The bolded words, image placement, headline, even the font style and size — it all makes them look like the same type of content. That's why it's always good to take a closer look!




One more thought: Like other news organizations, Axios has different types of ads on its website, such as this one from Walmart. Many news stories include hyperlinks (a previous News Goggles topic!), but when I click on this one it takes me to Walmart's website. It's important to remember that not all ads look the same.



axios.com Ad



axios.com Ad

 A message from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Nurturing energy innovation in rural communities




Electric cooperatives are leading by managing the transition in the electric sector and engaging their members to introduce energy innovation to more communities.

Key numbers: U.S. cooperatives are energy providers and engines of economic [growth for 42 million](#)



A message from Walmart
[The CDC taps Walmart](#), Sam's Club to assist with vaccine distribution in at least 22 states across the U.S.

 Marisa Fernandez
25 mins ago - Politics & Policy


Biden announces small business tax credits for vaccine PTO



The New York Times

Let's say you are scrolling for news and come across this post on The New York Times mobile app ...

Paid Post



106 530 660

SALESFORCE CUSTOMER 360

Find Ways to Continue Serving Customers in a Changing World of Work

Solutions to help your business now and in the future.

What is this? Is it a news story?
 Advertising? Do you see any clues?

More News

Today For You Sections

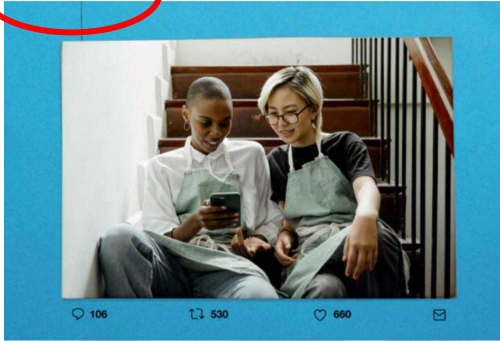
The New York Times



The big clue here is the label "Paid Post" above the image. It might be confusing at first because "More News" has the same kind of font and size and appears beneath. But this is another ad.

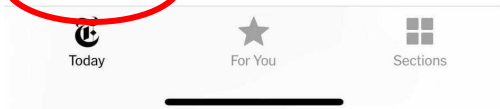
The New York Times
You Pfizer, Moderna: vaccine Recipients Declare Loyalty
What Kind of Flag Can I Fly Outside My House?

Paid Post

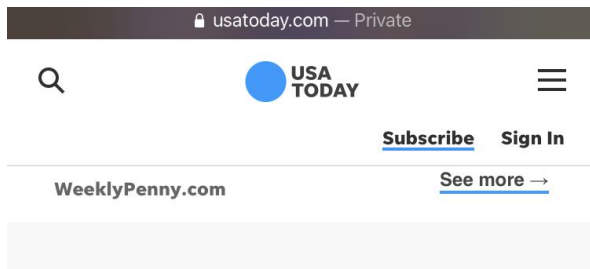


SALESFORCE CUSTOMER 360
Find Ways to Continue Serving Customers in a Changing World of Work
Solutions to help your business now and in the future.


More News



USA Today



Let's say you are scrolling for news on the USA Today website and come across this post on your device ...



When is the right time to buy a home?
Story from Rocket Mortgage®



Will Black people trust the system with Chauvin guilty?
OPINION Greg Moore 8:59 a.m. ET Apr. 21

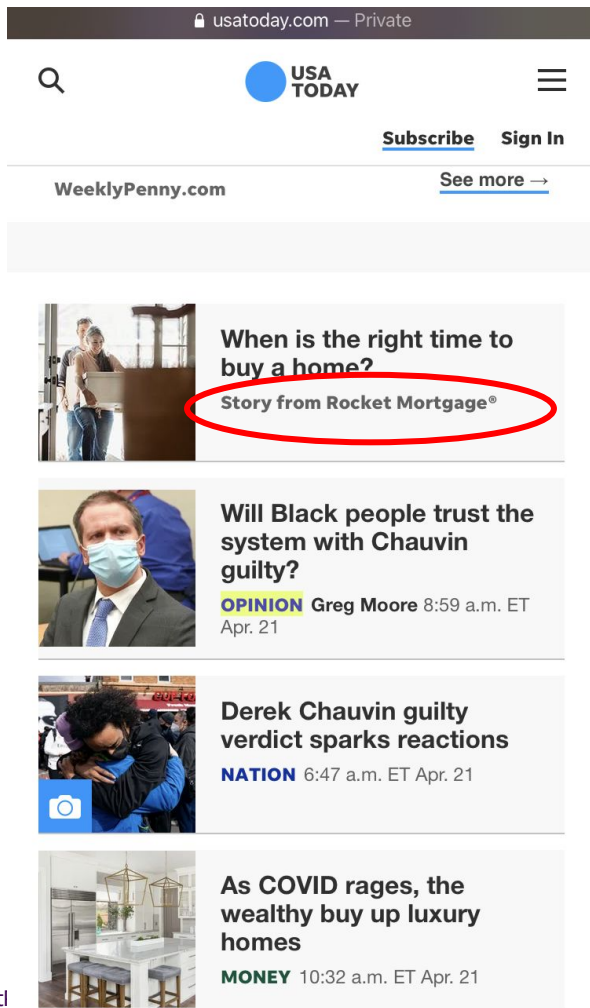


Derek Chauvin guilty verdict sparks reactions
NATION 6:47 a.m. ET Apr. 21



As COVID rages, the wealthy buy up luxury homes
MONEY 10:32 a.m. ET Apr. 21

Are all of these news stories? Are any advertising? How can you know?



The screenshot shows the USA Today mobile app interface. At the top, the address bar displays "usatoday.com — Private". Below it is a search bar, the USA TODAY logo, and a menu icon. Navigation links for "Subscribe" and "Sign In" are visible. A link for "WeeklyPenny.com" is shown with a "See more" arrow. The main content area features four news stories, each with a thumbnail image, a headline, and a sub-headline. The first story, "When is the right time to buy a home?", has a sub-headline "Story from Rocket Mortgage®" circled in red. The other stories are "Will Black people trust the system with Chauvin guilty?", "Derek Chauvin guilty verdict sparks reactions", and "As COVID rages, the wealthy buy up luxury homes".

usatoday.com — Private

USA TODAY

Subscribe Sign In

WeeklyPenny.com See more →

When is the right time to buy a home?
Story from Rocket Mortgage®

Will Black people trust the system with Chauvin guilty?
OPINION Greg Moore 8:59 a.m. ET Apr. 21

Derek Chauvin guilty verdict sparks reactions
NATION 6:47 a.m. ET Apr. 21

As COVID rages, the wealthy buy up luxury homes
MONEY 10:32 a.m. ET Apr. 21



This one made me do a double take! Did you think these were all news stories at first glance? I did. The shape, light gray background, image placement and font all look the same. Only upon closer inspection did I notice the words "Story from Rocket Mortgage." That was the biggest clue for me, since this suggests that the post is not from USA Today staff. Let's click it ...

Story from **ROCKET Mortgage** ⓘ

When is the right time to buy a home? Look for these 5 signs

These important factors are good indicators for when it's the right time to buy a home

By **Rocket Mortgage**®

Published 5:27 p.m. ET Mar. 30, 2021



[Show image info](#) ▾

Here's a reality about real estate: People buy and sell homes all the time. For most people, making the decision about the right time to buy



Interesting! Look, we're still on the USA Today website, and this story does at first look like other USA Today news reports. It's even labeled as a "story," but its byline is "Rocket Mortgage" — not USA Today staff. I wonder what happens when I click the little "i" next to "Story from Rocket Mortgage."



[Subscribe](#) [Sign In](#)

Story from **ROCKET Mortgage** ⓘ

This story is paid for by an advertiser. Members of the editorial and news staff of the USA TODAY Network were not involved in the creation of this content.

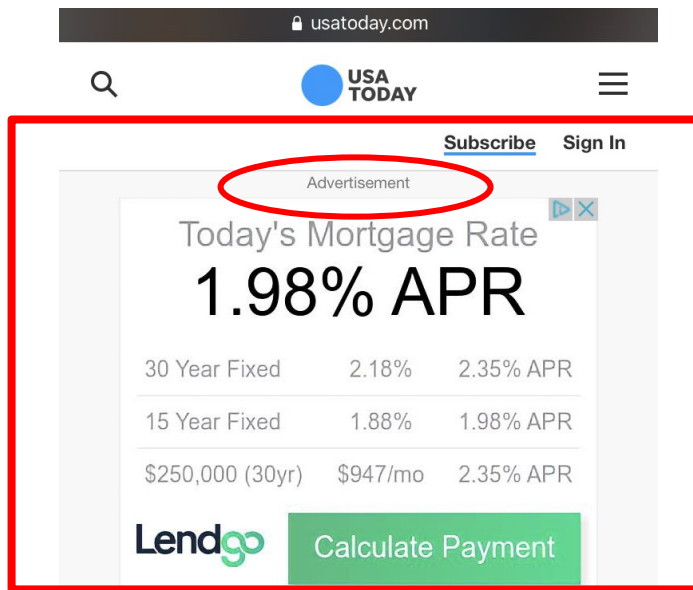
for when it's the right time to buy a home

By Rocket Mortgage®

Published 5:27 p.m. ET Mar. 30, 2021



Ah, here we go. This note tells us that this “story” was “paid for by an advertiser,” making it an ad — not a news report. Also, like I suspected, “Members of the editorial and news staff of the USA TODAY Network were not involved in the creation of this content.”



usatoday.com

USA TODAY

Subscribe Sign In

Advertisement

Today's Mortgage Rate

1.98% APR

30 Year Fixed	2.18%	2.35% APR
15 Year Fixed	1.88%	1.98% APR
\$250,000 (30yr)	\$947/mo	2.35% APR

Lendgo Calculate Payment



Look! Here's another ad on the USA Today website, but this one looks more like an ad to me at first glance and also includes the label "Advertisement."



Justice Department launches Minneapolis police inquiry
POLITICS 11:46 a.m. ET Apr. 21

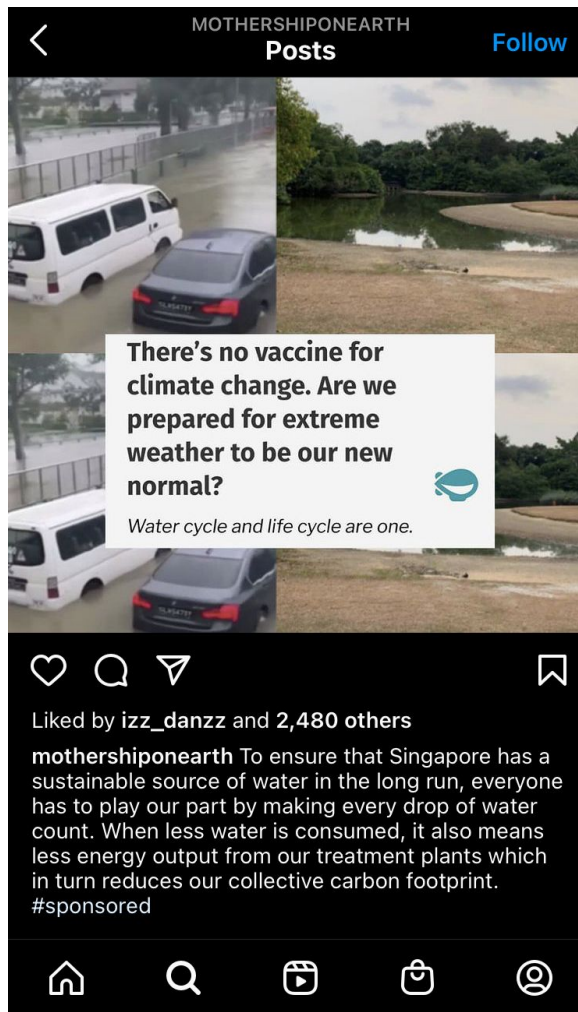


Columbus police fatally shoot teen: What we know
NATION 11:01 a.m. ET Apr. 21

Instagram

Instagram

Let's say you are scrolling on Instagram and come across this post ...

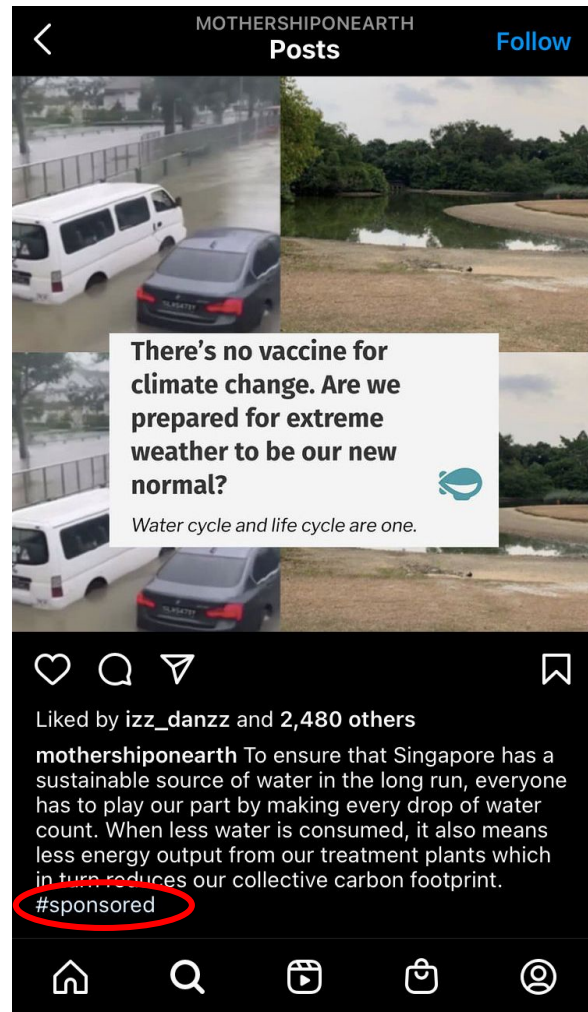


Is this a news story?
Is it advertising? Do
you see any clues?

Instagram



These photos look newsy to me. The text on top of the photos also has a newsy tone or feels like a headline. But look! At the bottom of the post is “#sponsored” — a common hashtag for ads. This is not news. It’s an ad.



News Goggles: Next steps

Discuss: Have you ever mistaken an ad online or on social media for a news story? What made you think it was a news story? Do you think it is important for people to know the difference between news stories and advertisements? Which of these examples of advertising would you say is most responsibly and clearly labeled? Which is most confusing?

Idea: Ask students to keep a journal for a week on examples of different advertising, including branded content, that they come across as part of their typical news consumption. What labels do they notice? Were some ads hard to identify?

Resources: [“InfoZones”](#) and [“Branded Content”](#) (NLP’s Checkology® virtual classroom); [Informable®](#) (NLP’s free mobile app).



The
Sift®



This exercise originated in the April 26, 2021, issue of The Sift® newsletter from the News Literacy Project. You can read archives of the newsletter and subscribe [here](#).



Thank you!



A future founded on facts



[/NewsLitProject](https://www.facebook.com/NewsLitProject)



[@NewsLitProject](https://twitter.com/NewsLitProject)



[@NewsLitProject](https://www.facebook.com/NewsLitProject)



[@NewsLitProject](https://www.instagram.com/NewsLitProject)



[LinkedIn.com/company/
NewsLitProject](https://www.linkedin.com/company/NewsLitProject)



[Youtube.com/
NewsLiteracyProject](https://www.youtube.com/NewsLiteracyProject)

[newslit.org](https://www.newslit.org)