EVERYDAY LIFE

onestopenglish

FAKE NEWS

WORKSHEET

EXERCISE 1

> **FAKE NEWS**
>
> A story that is presented as being a genuine item of news but is in fact not true and is intended to deceive people.

a. Work with a partner. Discuss these questions:

- Have you ever read fake news online? If so, how did you know it was fake?

- Why do you think people write fake news stories?

- What can people do to avoid fake news?

b. You would like to find some facts about penguins. Look at the list of information sources. Work with a partner. Rank the sources from 1–5 based on how much you would trust them (1 = most reliable, 5 = least reliable)

- a page about penguins on Wikipedia _____

- a reference book called 'The Wildlife of Antarctica', published in 1992 _____

- a fact page on a website called 'welovepenguins.com'_____

- a fact page on a website for a wildlife charity _____

- an online article with the headline 'Top 10 AMAZING facts about penguins that you WON'T BELIEVE!'_____

Explain your answers to another pair. Justify your opinions.

EXERCISE 2

a. Work with a partner. Look at the words/phrases in the box.

- Explain the words/phrases you already know.

- If you don't know the meaning of a phrase, see if your partner can help you.

- If you are still unsure about any words/phrases, use a dictionary or ask your teacher.

> source   fact   biased   grab someone's attention   headline
> be familiar with something   confirm something   claim   if in doubt

b. Match the words or phrases from the box with their correct definition. You may need to change the form of the word or phrase.

1. We could put a nice display in the show window. That might _____ the customer's _____.

2. I'm not sure I trust this information. Is it from a primary _____?

3. I really think the referee is _____. I mean, he's given us two red cards and given the other team three penalties! That's hardly fair, is it?

4. This medication may not be suitable for people with existing illnesses. _____, consult your doctor before using this product.

5. It's a scientific _____ that the Earth orbits the sun, although people haven't always believed this.

6. Sorry, I'm a Windows user. I'm not _____ Macs. Could you help me load some files?

7. They _____ the appointment of the new Prime Minister late last night.

8. The suspect _____ that he was at home when the crime took place.

9. I don't really watch the news. I listen to the _____ now and then, but I find most of the news these days depressing.

EXERCISE 3

a. **Identifying fake news isn't easy! The table below lists various tips to help you decide whether an online information source can be trusted. Match the tip title to its description.**

- Think about the source
- Are you biased?
- Ask the experts
- Keep reading …
- Is it a joke?
- Check the author
- Check the date
- Supporting sources

1.	Do you know the source? Have you used this source in the past? What is the mission or purpose of the website (e.g. to entertain, inform, promote, sell, etc)? Where was this source shared? Do you trust information that is shared on social media?
2.	Sometimes articles begin with a headline that grabs the reader's attention. Read on, because the headline may not tell the whole story.
3.	Who wrote the article? Are you familiar with the writer? Are they even a real person?
4.	If a story includes sources for its facts, click on the sources. Check the details – do the sources actually say what the story claims?
5.	When was the article published? Is it up-to-date, or is it old news? Be careful – some sites will repost old stories but change the date to make them seem more recent.
6.	Is the article actually serious? There are many sites which share fake stories that are meant to be funny.
7.	What's your opinion on the topic? People often trust information that confirms their own beliefs. We are also more likely to trust information shared by people (e.g. friends) that have similar beliefs to our own. A story might share ideas that support your own views, but that doesn't mean they are true.
8.	If in doubt, ask an expert. There are online fact checking sites that can help you decide if information is real or fake.

b. **Look back at the sources from Exercise 1b. Which of the tips from the table relate to each source?**

EXERCISE 4

a. Read the short article on penguins. Make notes about the article in the table.

Tip	Reliable (YES/NO)	Comments
Think about the source		
Keep reading …		
Check the author		
Supporting sources		
Check the date		
Is it a joke?		
Are you biased?		
Ask the experts		

b. Work with a partner. Annotate the text with ten specific questions for the reader. The questions should help the reader notice that this text is fake.

Examples from paragraph 1:

'The population of penguins in Antarctica is at its lowest since records began in 1921.'

- Did records on penguin populations really begin in 1921?

'Some sources have reported an 80% decline in penguin numbers across the continent in the last 50 years.'

- Which sources?

c. Discuss the questions with a partner.

- Which fake features of the text did you find it easy/difficult to identify?
- Do you often check supporting sources, author details or website missions when you read an online article? Why / Why not?
- Is there anything you've learnt from this activity that you can apply in real life?

EXERCISE 5

Choose one of the tasks from the options below.

Task 1

Open an online article that you've read recently. Alternatively, open an online article that somebody has shared on your social media news feed. Analyse the article using the tips from this lesson. Share your findings with a partner.

FAKE NEWS

Task 2

Summarise the tips and information from this lesson as an infographic to share in the classroom.

Task 3

Can you write your own fake news?

Choose a topic from the list:

- a fake news story about a sports star, written by fans of an opposing team
- fake celebrity gossip, written to encourage internet users to visit a website
- a news story which adds evidence to the idea that climate change is not real
- a 'shock' article designed to get readers to change their habits or lifestyle
- your own ideas

Create a short fake news story (200 words) on this topic. Remember, try not to make it obvious that the article is fake news.

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Revealed: The REAL reason the penguin population of Antarctica is at an all-time low

Experts say tourism and predators have seriously affected numbers.

By Adelie Humboldt

The population of penguins in Antarctica is at its lowest since records began in 1921. Some sources have reported an 80% decline in penguin numbers across the continent in the last 50 years, and numbers are likely to fall even more.

Scientists from the *Institute of Penguin Research*, based on the northern tip of Antarctica, say that the decline in numbers is mainly due to increased tourism.

'We've noticed a sharp increase in the amount of commercial boats travelling to and from Antarctica in recent years,' said Scott Amundsen. These boats are polluting the penguin's natural habitat, and disturbing their breeding patterns.

Scientists stressed that the decline in penguin numbers was not connected to climate change. Amundsen added, 'We've been based on Antarctica for over two decades. We've seen no real changes to the ice here, it's the same as it's always been. The problem is not climate change, it's tourism. Don't let those so-called climate-change experts fool you.'

Amundsen also stated that a further reason for the fall in penguin numbers – an increase in the number of predators in the area. 'The seal population has increased dramatically in recent years, which poses a real threat to penguins. But it's the rise in polar bear numbers that is the real problem.'