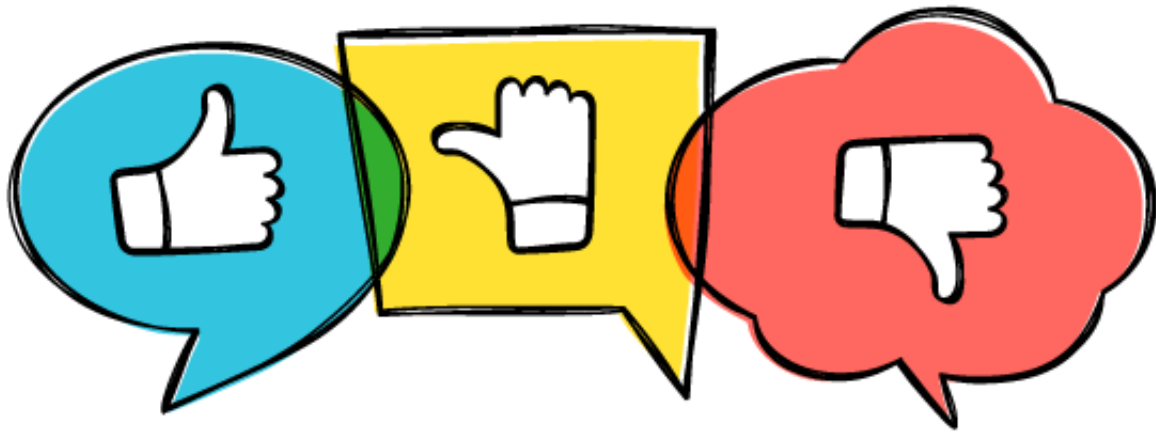


Remember That Fake News You Read? It May Help You Remember Even More

October 16, 2020



Summary: Thinking back on a time you encountered false information or “fake news” may prime your brain to better recall truthful memories.

People who receive reminders of past misinformation may form new factual memories with greater fidelity, according to an article published in the journal [Psychological Science](#).

Past research highlights one insidious side of fake news: The more you encounter the same misinformation—for instance, that world governments are covering up the existence of flying saucers—the more familiar and potentially believable that false information becomes.

New research, however, has found that reminders of past misinformation can help protect against remembering misinformation as true while improving recollection of real-world events and information.

“Reminding people of previous encounters with fake news can improve memory and beliefs for facts that correct misinformation,” said Christopher Wahlheim, a lead author on the paper and assistant professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. “This suggests that pointing out conflicting information could improve the comprehension of truth in some situations.”

Wahlheim and colleagues conducted two experiments examining whether reminders of misinformation could improve memory for and beliefs in corrections. Study participants were shown corrections of news and information they may have encountered in the past. Reminders of past misinformation appeared before some corrections but not others. Study results showed that misinformation reminders increased the participants' recall of facts and belief accuracy. The researchers interpreted the results to indicate that misinformation reminders raise awareness of discrepancies and promote memory updating. These results may be pertinent to individuals who confront misinformation frequently.

“It suggests that there may be benefits to learning how someone was being misleading. This knowledge may inform strategies that people use to counteract high exposure to misinformation spread for political gain,” Wahlheim said.

See related content in the APS Research Topic on [Memory](#).

Reference: Wahlheim, C. N., Alexander T. R., & Peske, C. D. (2020). Reminders of everyday misinformation statements can enhance memory for and beliefs in corrections of those statements in the short term. *Psychological Science*, 31(10), 1325–1339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797620952797>