

Why Misinformation Sticks and Corrections Can Backfire

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TIME:

At the height of campaign season in any presidential election year, voters will be inundated with all kinds of information of dubious accuracy, from misleading claims about candidates' personal lives to exaggerations about their policy differences. Unfortunately, it's precisely this type of misinformation — the kind that hews to people's preexisting political, religious or social ideology — that sticks.

As a new review of past research concludes, “mud” sticks — and, worse, attempts to correct erroneous beliefs can backfire, reinforcing the very misrepresentations they aim to erase. The main problem, the research reveals, is that rejecting information takes more mental effort than accepting it, and given our social environment, most people's default position is to believe what others tell them. “For better or worse,” the authors write, “the acceptance of information as true is favored by tacit norms of everyday conversational conduct.” Indeed, some research even suggests that in order for the brain to process incoming information at all, it must initially assume that the information is correct.

Read the whole story: [*TIME*](#)