

How to Avoid Misleading News

In a quest to be well informed, you can be open to all types of messages. However, some are more likely to be misleading than others.

Although some messages of the following four types can be truthful and accurate, many others are not. When you encounter such a message be especially aware that it could be inaccurate or misleading:

- **Type 1:** Internet content, movies, broadcasts, live events, and social media posts that evoke an immediate emotional response and ask you to donate or spend money, or ask you to record your support for a specific cause
- **Type 2:** Political speeches or commentaries
- **Type 3:** Commentary of a scientist when enthusiastically talking about his or her own research
- **Type 4:** Conveyance of a spiritual or religious belief, when the conveyor cites a source that cannot be verified as a reliable source

A message can be very misleading, even though the sender may not have intended it to be.

Consider these examples:

- **Here's an example of internet content.** In this example of a video ad there is no direct request for the viewer to donate or send money. The viewer is not asked to record support for a specific cause. Thus this ad is unlikely to be misleading nor be attempting to deceive.

This video ad was titled "You are going to beat out men that have been recruited to be here." The ad was streamed on January 13, 2025 before viewing of the 2024 movie *Unstoppable*, about one-legged wrestler Anthony Robles, streamed via Amazon Prime Video. The ad states

"I'm a little scared. Show them that anything is possible. All eyes are on Anthony Robles. You make people believe in something. They don't see someone who is missing a leg. They see someone who is unstoppable. You are Unstoppable, A lifetime of dreams and hard work. You are not done yet."

- **The following is an example of a political commentary.** This example may unintentionally lead to misleading conclusions. Behind this opinion article is an overriding purpose of attracting support for a cause. Although the author conveys a sincere belief in his position, he does not offer a broad range of verifiable support for his analysis.

In this 2024 commentary titled "[The GOP Is Politicizing Juvenile Crime for Political Gain](#)" writer Michael Collins states the following:

The GOP's criminal justice platform in a few words: attack prosecutors for treating kids like kids.

Over the past several years, reform-minded prosecutors like Alameda County District Attorney Pamela Price and Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty have been elected on platforms that involve a commitment to not charge juveniles in adult court. This is a simple promise that has and will continue to deliver equitable justice without exception to children. However, the implementation of this commitment has been met with intense backlash, resulting in attempts from the far right to undermine the discretion of reform-minded prosecutors and remove them from office.

In Oakland, District Attorney Price's decision to charge a 17-year-old in juvenile court was [leaked](#) by an adversarial media outlet. Soon after, this decision became fuel for the recall facing Price, bolstered by the same MAGA messaging on crime we see catching fire across the country. In Minneapolis, County Attorney Mary Moriarty charged a 15-year-old in juvenile court, resulting in sustained requests from Republican state officials to transfer the case to the state attorney general's office. As major cities across the country have elected reform-minded prosecutors, Republican lawmakers have attacked and disparaged them at the great cost of Black communities, who are disproportionately impacted by tough-on-crime prosecutorial practices.

- **This is an example of commentary from scientists.** These scientists' enthusiasm caused them to skip a step in their research before they published an academic paper about their work. Their paper was misleading in that it suggested the unverifiable fact that the Linux computer operating system may have been corrupted.

Because the authors were enthusiastic about stopping digital corruption of the master version of Linux, they acted prematurely to test the process of updating the master version. Their premature action, taken without thorough discussion within the Linux Open-Source Software (OSS) community, was unintentional but very damaging since it raised doubts about the integrity of the master version. The authors subsequently withdrew their academic paper, thus complying with The Linux Foundation's request that it be withdrawn.

In this 2021 academic paper titled "On the Feasibility of Stealthily Introducing Vulnerabilities in Open-Source Software via Hypocrite Commits", authors Qiushi Wu and Kangjie Lu included the following in their abstract:

"As proof of concept, we take the Linux kernel as target

OSS and safely demonstrate that it is practical for a malicious committer to introduce use-after-free bugs.”

In their paper the authors explained how they “safely” demonstrated changing the Linux operating system, but their described procedure was not as safe as it could have been, thus raising the possibility that the master version of Linux had inadvertently been changed by the demonstration. Further investigation by others determined that the master Linux version had not been changed by the demonstration, but in the interim there was much additional work and worry about Linux’s integrity.

See “To Learn More” below, for an explanation of technical terms in the paper’s title and abstract.

- **Consider an expression of religious beliefs.** Such expressions are a primary source of spiritual, social and emotional support. These communications can be of great value when they are sincere.

The following discussion transcript was part of a prayer service offered by The Fort Ministry of Casper, Wyoming in March 2025:

*“just speak the name of
Jesus so God whatever we’re facing
whatever we’re dealing with today
God I just ask instead of trying to
figure it all out and Solve the Riddle
and fix the problem in the
relationship God I just ask that today
we will
just speak Jesus’s
name into whatever it is that we need to
present to you in this
moment”*

Since this message doesn't cite sources, it's unlikely to be purposely misleading or deceptive. The discussion is simply an emotional, heartfelt expression of belief.

However, if the discussion had instead cited one or more sources without reliably verifying those sources, then the discussion might likely be misleading or deceptive.

If, say, the speaker specifically mentioned that Jesus of Nazareth directed listeners to “just speak Jesus's name into whatever it is that we need to present to God”, then this message is also unlikely to be misleading. Though Jesus of Nazareth may not be a verified authority in a scientific sense, he *is* believed by many to be a true authority that would not mislead others.

On the other hand, if the speaker specifically said that another church pastor had directed listeners to “just speak Jesus's name into whatever it is that we need to present to God”, then the speaker should provide one or more reliable reference for the other church pastor (who has been quoted as a source). If such a referencing is not provided, then this message could be inadvertently or purposely misleading.

To Learn More

To learn more about Anthony Robles, go to [Anthony Robles, Wikipedia](#)

To learn more about the 2024 movie *Unstoppable*, go to [Unstoppable \(2024 film\), Wikipedia](#)

To learn more about Michael Collins go to [Michael Collins, Common Dreams](#)

To learn more about MAGA go to [MAGA, Wikipedia](#)

To learn more about the withdrawn academic paper titled “On the Feasibility of Stealthily Introducing Vulnerabilities in Open-Source Software via Hypocrite Commits”, go to [Response to The Linux Foundation-4-27-21](#). The authors withdrew their academic paper on April 26, 2021, thus complying with The Linux Foundation’s request that was made on or before April 27, 2021, requesting that the paper be withdrawn.

To learn more about withdrawn academic papers go to [Retraction In Academic Publishing, Wikipedia](#)

To learn more about Open-Source Software, go to [Open-source software, Wikipedia](#)

To learn more about Hypocrite Commits, go to [hypocrite commit, Wiktionary](#)

To learn more about Linux, go to [Linux, Wikipedia](#)

To learn more about the Linux Foundation, go to [Linux Foundation, Wikipedia](#)

To learn more about the Linux Kernel, go to [Linux kernel, Wikipedia](#)

To learn more about a software kernel, go to [Kernel \(operating system\), Wikipedia](#)

To learn more about use-after-free software vulnerability, go to [Use-after-free, NordVPV](#)

To learn more about the prayer service given in March 2025 by the The Fort Ministry, go to [Prayer Service, Facebook](#)

A fact is an observation that can likely be repeated. It needs to be an observation that is experienced by the observer (not just the making of a

comment). A verified fact is an observation that has been repeated by other independent observers. To learn more about what is “fact”, go to [Fact, Wikipedia](#).

A fiction is an imagined story. To learn more about what is “fiction”, go to [Fiction, Wikipedia](#).

To learn more about Fact Checkers, go to [Fact-checking, Wikipedia](#) and [List of fact-checking websites, Wikipedia](#).