

Digital Literacy: Break the Fake

From mediasmarts.ca

Students will explore the challenges of identifying what is real and what is fake online. After learning some simple steps to verify online information, they will create a poster that communicates the importance of questioning and double-checking online content.

Part 1: Introduction:

1. Watch the video, House Hippo 2.0:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R_tOSRynZU&feature=youtu.be

2. Pause the video just after the narrator says, “It looks like Canada has a house hippo problem.”

Discuss with someone at home, OR write down your responses/thoughts:

- Is this video real?
- Could it be real?
- If it is fake, why might somebody want to make a fake video about house hippos?

3. Watch the rest of the video.

Discuss with someone at home, OR write down your responses/thoughts:

- How do you think the video was made?

*Find out how it was made in the **Answers** section

Part 2: Real or Fake?



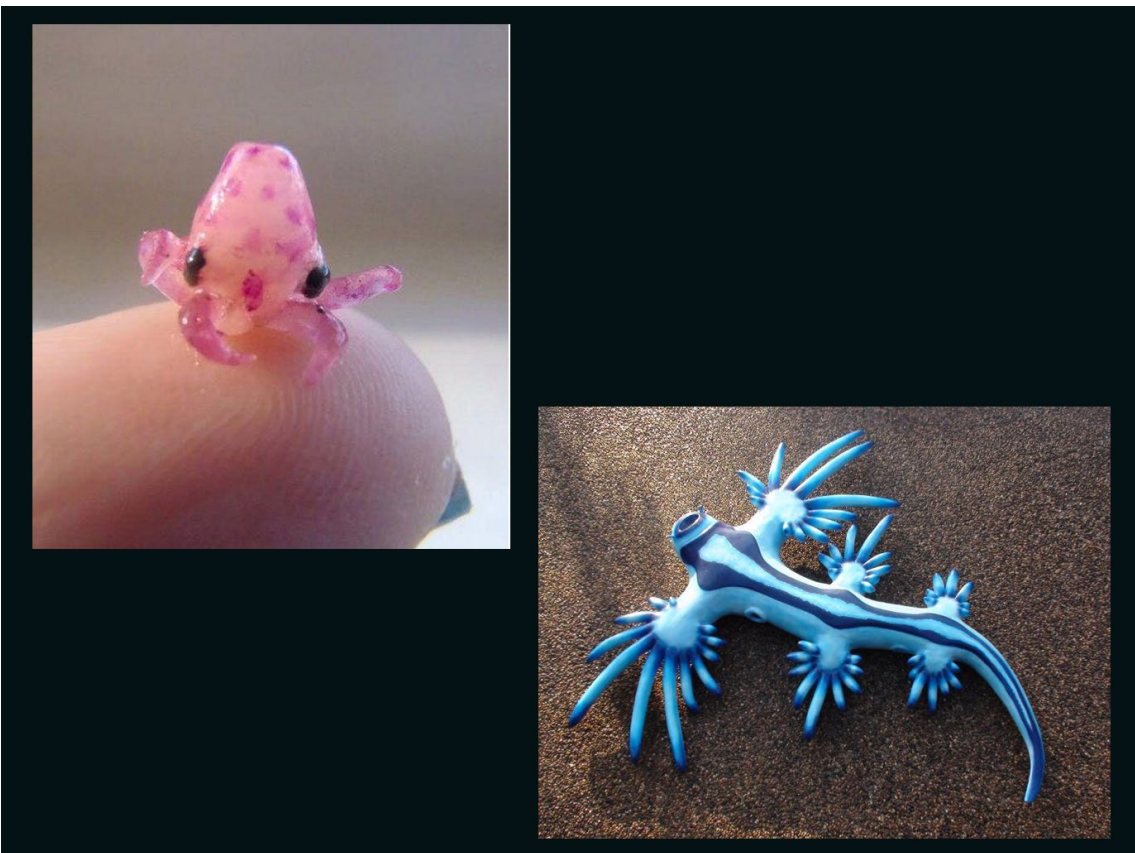
It’s pretty easy to fool people online by digitally or physically manipulating the image or video.

Check out the following pictures and decide whether they are real or fake!

4.



5.

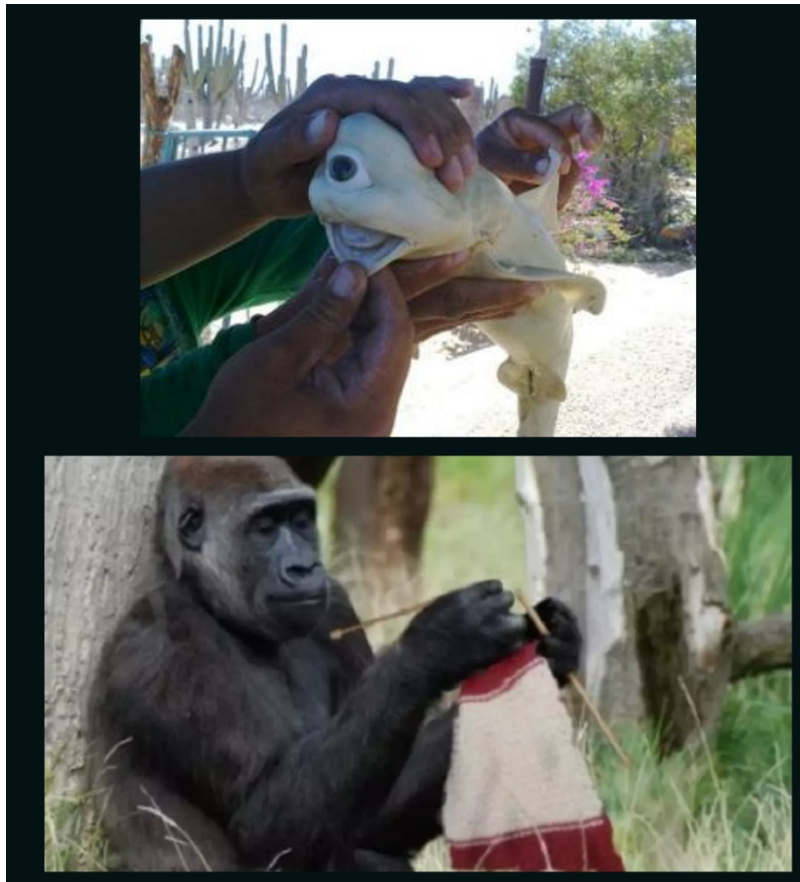


6.



7.

7.



In most cases of the pictures you just examined, there was no way to tell which was real and which was fake just by looking!

The screenshot shows a website with a green background. At the top, it says "Help Save The ENDANGERED PACIFIC NORTHWEST TREE OCTOPUS From EXTINCTION!". Below this is a navigation bar with links for "About", "HELP", "FAQs", "Sightings", "Media", "Activities", and "Links". The main content is divided into several columns. On the left, there is a pink octopus illustration and a section titled "CEPHALONEWS" with text about a human participant in a fishing derby. The middle column has a section titled "THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST TREE OCTOPUS" with text describing the species and its habitat. To the right of this text is a photograph of a brown tree octopus on a branch. Below the text is a map of the Pacific Northwest region. At the bottom, there is more text about the octopus's intelligence and a small image of a tree octopus.

Using a search engine like Google is not enough because when you search for something—even if it's completely made up like the House Hippo and the Tree octopus—the top results will often be the site that claims it's true.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "tree octopus". The search bar contains "tree octopus" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar are navigation options: "All", "Images", "Videos", "News", "Maps", "More", "Settings", and "Tools". The search results show "About 132,000,000 results (0.55 seconds)". The top result is "Save The Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus" with the URL "https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus" and a date of "Mar 8, 1998". Below this is another result "The Pacific Northwest Tree Octopus | Sightings" with the URL "https://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/sightings".

Part 3: What's Real Online?

It's easy to make things that look real online, but it's also easy to double-check them!

Here are three questions you can ask to find out if something is real or not online.

1. Where did it come from?

Because it's so easy to copy and share things online, it's important to find out where something originally came from before you decide whether or not to trust it.

- On a website, follow links that lead back to the sources.
- You can also use a search engine like Google or DuckDuckGo to find out where the story originally came from.
- To find the original source of a picture, you can use something called *reverse image search*.
- Start by right-clicking on the image. Then select the option "Copy Image Location."
 - On a Mac, hold down Control while clicking instead of right-clicking
 - On Chrome and Safari, select Copy Image Address
 - On Edge, select Copy.
- Then go to the website [Tineye.com](https://tineye.com) and paste in the address you just copied. Sort the results to show the oldest first.

2. Is it coming from a reliable source?

Whether you're looking at a website, a picture, a video, or a news story, what matters is whether or not the source that *originally* created it are reliable.

- You can find out if a source is reliable by asking someone like a teacher, a librarian, or an adult who lives with you.
- You can also do a search on the source. Check Wikipedia to see if the source has a good track record for being reliable.

Tip: Sometimes it can be faster to start with a source that you already know if reliable. If you're looking for information on animals, for example, you can go straight to National Geographic and search there instead of going through Google.

3. Has somebody debunked it already?

Sometimes a single search can Break the Fake if a professional fact-checker has already done the work for you.

- You can use a specific fact-checker website like [Snopes.com](https://snopes.com), or the Media Smarts search engine bit.ly/fact-search that searches 8 fact-checkers at once.
- You can also do a regular search for the story and add the words "hoax" or "fake."

Part 4: Make Your Own House Hippo Poster

Open bit.ly/hippoposter and click on “Make a Copy.”

Pick one of the backgrounds on the right and drag it to the checkered area in the middle of the screen.

Pick one of the hippos on the left and drag it to where you want it on the background. Resize it to the size you want using the squares around the edges and move it so that it looks right to you.

Double-click on the text at the top. Change it to a message that explains why it’s important to think twice and double-check anything you see online. If you need to, click on the squares around the edge of the text box to resize it.

When you’re happy with your poster, click on File and then Download. Pick PDF for JPG format and save it with your name as part of the file name.



Answers for Part 2

3. Did you know the House Hippos were puppets? No CGI here?



4. The warning sign about the blackbirds is real; the one warning about squirrels is fake.

5. The octopus is made of plastic; the animal on the right, a nudibranch, is real.

6. Both photos are real! The top picture, of a weasel clinging to the back of a woodpecker, was taken by a nature photographer in England; the second is of an animal called the Malabar Ground Squirrel.

7. The top photo, of a “cyclops shark” is real (this is not a species of shark, however; sharks’ eyes sometimes fuse into one while they’re developing before being born); in the second photo the gorilla is real but the knitting needles and scarf were edited in.