



# We Are All Broadcasters

## – tip sheet

Thanks to the internet, today we're not just consumers of news but broadcasters as well – and our friends and families are counting on us to only share accurate, reliable information. In fact, half of us pay more attention to who shared a story with us, instead of where it originally came from.

Here are three tips to make sure you share good information and stop the spread of hoaxes, rumours and scams.

### 1. Watch for your own bias

One of the hardest things about being a responsible sharer is to be aware of the reasons why you might be more likely to believe something without evidence. Before you share a story, take a few minutes to see whether you've fallen into one of these common biases:

- *Filling in the puzzle:* People are natural storytellers, and we like it when things fit into a pattern. Once we think that we recognize a pattern, we're more likely to accept things that fit into the pattern and more likely to ignore things that don't. Some patterns *are* real, of course, but you should still judge each fact for itself and not for how well it fits the pattern.
- *Ignoring inconvenient facts:* We're even more likely to accept or ignore things depending on whether or not they support what we already believe. A warm day in February – or a cold one in July – don't really provide evidence for or against climate change, but our opinion on that issue will make us more likely to *think* that one or the other does.
- *Not wanting to make waves:* We can also be influenced by what people around us believe. If we know that all of our family or friends believe something – especially if it's a strongly emotional belief – we're more likely to pay attention to things that confirm it and ignore things that argue against it.



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- *Paying more attention to unusual things:* There's a natural tendency to be more worried about rare, dramatic events, like plane crashes, than more common ones like car crashes. Media can also make us believe that things that are considered *newsworthy*, like plane crashes or violent crime, are more common than they actually are.
- *Not wanting to admit we don't know:* A lot of the time we jump to conclusions even if we don't have enough information to make an informed decision. This could explain why people who know more about things like politics are actually *more* likely to fall for some of these biases!

## 2. Debunk with details

Being a broadcaster means that we're not only responsible for what we share, but for what other people in our network share as well. Here are some tips for what to do if someone you know is sharing misinformation:

- *Don't get personal:* Try to avoid engaging with the parts of the issue that are strongly emotional and focus on the facts.
- *Replace bad facts with good ones:* It's not enough just to debunk false information: in fact, there's some evidence that can make people believe it even more. Instead, provide enough accurate facts to replace the inaccurate story in people's minds.
- *Make it a learning opportunity:* Don't just tell people they're wrong – show them how you fact-checked the claim. That gives you more credibility and also shows how they can fact-check for themselves in the future.
- *Don't care too much about winning:* People who hold an opinion strongly aren't likely to change their minds, but people who are still undecided might. The most important thing isn't to get the person sharing bad information to admit they're wrong: what matters is that the other people in your network come away with the right information.

## 3. Think before you share

It's hard to make good decisions about anything in the heat of the moment. When you're tempted to share something that you feel strongly about, give yourself some time – 10 or 20 minutes – to decide whether or not it's something you're willing to stand behind.

