Facebook, Google, and Twitter have recently been accused of promoting fake news stories. Depending on your sources and who you believe, fake news played a role in the 2016 presidential election. However, fake news is misused in a number of ways:

- Propaganda, trying to influence opinion
- Direct attacks on a political opponent
- Stock manipulation scams
- Shock people into clicking and infect their machine with malware (celebrity deaths)
- Sell advertising

So, how do you protect yourself against this type of scam? The very first thing you need to do with any kind of internet message you see is this: CONSIDER THE SOURCE. Meaning you ask yourself the following questions: Where did this come from? Who wrote it? What is their agenda?

There are a large number of false, misleading, clickbait, and/or satirical “news” sources you need to watch out for. Here are 8 Tips to analyze news sources and make sure you do not fall for their scams:

1. Avoid websites that end in “lo”, for example Newslo. These sites take pieces of accurate information and then packaging that information with other false or misleading “facts”.

2. Watch out for websites that end in “.com.co” as they are often fake versions of real news sources, and strange or unusual domain names are a big red flag.

3. If other known and reputable news sites are not also reporting on the story, that is a red flag.

4. If it is an anonymous story and there is no known / trusted author, it’s suspect.

5. Some news organizations are letting bloggers post under their banner, but many of these posts are opinion and not facts, make sure you note the difference. (Examples are: BuzzFeed, Forbes blogs.)

6. If you are in doubt because of bad design or grammar/spelling, check their “About Us” tab or look them up on Snopes for verification of that source.

7. If the story makes you upset or angry, it’s a good idea to keep reading about the topic using other sources to make sure the author wasn’t doing that on purpose (with potentially misleading or false information) to generate shares and ad revenue.

8. It’s always best to read multiple sources of information to get a variety of viewpoints and perspectives, which allows you to spot bias in reporting and confirm information with other sources before you decide to take action.

To summarize, consider the source, double check if the data is correct using other reliable sources, and especially with “fake news”... **Think Before You Click!”**