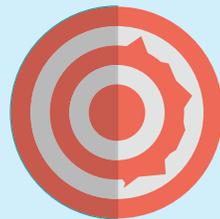# When to Trust Your Eyes:
How to Catch an Altered Image

Five Tips on How to Evaluate Images

It's been said a picture is worth a thousand words. Here are five tips to help make sure you know which pictures to trust and which to view skeptically.

Bends and distortions.

If there are weird bends or distortions to the background, beware! Crooked doorways, flat glasses, or other unnatural shapes are good indications that the image has been altered.

Reflections and light.

If reflections and shadows don't match the shapes you see in the images, the picture has probably been altered. Light is difficult to image edit perfectly, so be on the lookout for odd shines, missing shadows, and distorted reflections.
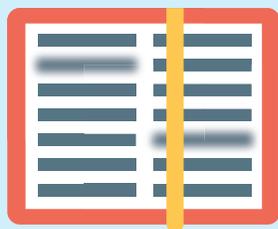
Look for the blur.

If everything in the photo is in focus, it is likely a composite of multiple images. Usually a single photo will have some parts in sharp focus and others in soft focus or a bit blurry. If everything in the photo is in sharp focus, someone probably built the photo from multiple images. If the whole photo is slightly blurry – like a very poor quality image – that is also a sign that it could have been tampered with. It is easier to tamper with poor quality images than high quality ones.

Check the date.

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The hot new image causing outrage on the Internet may be real, just from another story, another season, or another year. Before getting caught up by an image, check the date to make sure it is what (and when) it purports to be.

Get help from technology.

You've used your tips and you're still not sure about an image. Check the photo online. Use your search engine to perform a reverse image search for the image you're questioning. This will help you determine where it is coming from, when it was first circulated, and whether or not you think it is something that should influence your judgment. If a reverse image search doesn't get you the answer you need, check out other image detectors to find out what technology can tell you about your image.

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