COLOR OF CHANGE
DIGITAL DEFENSE GUIDE

Fake, AI, or Real? Know the Difference

Color Of Change Best Practices to Protect Yourself Online

It is becoming increasingly difficult to tell whether the content we see online is real or artificially generated. Advances in artificial intelligence are making images, videos, and audio more convincing than ever, blurring the line between reality and fabrication. This has serious consequences for Black communities, who are already disproportionately targeted by misinformation, scams, and harmful narratives. As part of our Black Tech Agenda, Color Of Change believes Black people deserve control over our digital lives. We are committed to equipping our members with the tools and knowledge to recognize false and manipulated content and protect themselves online.

COLOR OF CHANGE | BLACK TECH AGENDA

BELOW ARE SOME BEST PRACTICES FOR SPOTTING AI CONTENT:

• Pay close attention to facial expressions and hands.
Pay close attention to facial expressions and hands. Be cautious of overly smooth features, glossy textures, and unnatural lighting. AI-generated images and videos often struggle to accurately reflect natural human expression and movement. Look for faces that appear stiff, overly symmetrical, or unnaturally perfect. Pay close attention to hands and fingers. AI may distort them, add extra fingers, merge them into other objects, or blur them unnaturally. These inconsistencies can be signs that the content is artificially generated.

• Be suspicious of very smooth features, crisp images, or glossy backgrounds.
AI-generated content can create skin that looks plastic, airbrushed, or unrealistically smooth. Lighting may be inconsistent, and backgrounds may appear overly glossy, blurred, or disconnected from the subject. If the image or video looks too perfect or visually "off," it is worth questioning its authenticity.

• Look out for irregular blending or distorted objects.
Check whether objects are blending into people, passing through walls, or appearing in unnatural positions. AI can struggle with spatial awareness, which can result in warped backgrounds, misplaced items, or elements that do not align correctly. These visual errors are often a sign of AI-generated content.

• Ask yourself whether the image or video makes sense.
Context matters. Consider whether the situation, setting, or behavior in the content is realistic. Does it align with what you know to be true? Does it feel staged, exaggerated, or implausible? Trust your judgment and think critically about what you are seeing before assuming it is real.

• Use AI detection tools when possible.
Some platforms use invisible watermarks to identify AI-generated content, and there are online tools that attempt to detect whether an image or video may have been generated or altered by AI. These tools are not perfect, but they can be helpful when you are unsure about the authenticity of what you are seeing. Always combine these tools with critical thinking and source checking.

Remember: AI is a tool, not a source of truth.

Scammers, fraudsters, and bad actors increasingly use AI-generated content to target Black communities with misinformation, impersonation scams, and fabricated stories. Our goal is to ensure you have the tools to protect yourself and your community. If something feels off, take a moment to verify the source before believing or sharing it. Staying informed, asking questions, and trusting your instincts are key to navigating the digital world safely.

For more information visit coc.is/digitaldefenseguide