

Trolls, Bots & Sock Puppets - Tip Sheet

There are lots of good people on social media, but not everyone online is who they appear to be. Here are some accounts to avoid:

Trolls	<p>A troll is a fake social media account that is used to harass people. The troll tries to stir up trouble. They will even make up stories to get people to fight with each other. The goal of a troll is to drive away or silence people they don't like or people who don't share their opinions. They do that by making it too unpleasant for their targets to stay.</p> <p>It might be a troll if posts are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● personal attacks● mean● filled with name-calling or threats● not related to the topic● frequent - they comment on nearly everything that their target posts
Bots	<p>A bot is an AI or automated account that is programmed (like a "robot") to pass along misinformation to a lot of people very quickly. It seems like it is a real person or organization, but it is really a fictional character.</p> <p>It might be a bot if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● the same post is repeated (not just shared) by many different accounts.● the post is never original - it just echoes the talking points of a business, government, politician, or political party and never shares posts from anyone else.● the poster follows lots of people or accounts but has very few followers● includes a string of numbers in their handle.● has been created very near the same date of a major event that fills their posts.
Sock Puppets	<p>A sock puppet is a real person who is hiding behind a fake identity. The fake identity lets them avoid consequences for posting things that they shouldn't.</p> <p>It might be a sock puppet if the account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● often shares very controversial or extreme viewpoints.● trashes a business, group, or person over and over● shares only glowing praise for a particular business, group, or person● posts things that seem too good to be true (like a celebrity with millions of followers picking you as a friend).● sends messages that ask you to do things that make you uncomfortable (asking you for personal information or pictures or asking you to make a special account that you hide from your parents).● describe themselves in ways that make it seem like they were taken from a list of stereotypes, like someone who is old pretending that they are your age.● often "likes" posts that express prejudice, even against their own group.