



Activity 4: Misinformation on the Internet





Objective:

To recognise signs of misinformation on the internet.



Omar

Olive



Newsi:

Hi! My name is Newsi and these are my friends Omar and Olive. We are members of our school's News Club. We have been researching Climate Change for our next School News Bulletin.



Newsi

As we've been searching online we've found some great facts for our article but we've also found some websites which have made us very confused.

Olive

Some websites say that Climate Change is real and that it is caused by humans but other sites say that it is a myth! Which sites should we believe?





Omar

I've got an idea!
Let's ask AJ, the Librarian! He helps lots of students
with their research.

**NEWS
FLASH!**



Hello News Club!

Well done for coming to ask me for help.
Sometimes the internet can be confusing
and it is always a good idea to ask for help
from an adult that you trust.

**NEWS
FLASH!**

Sometimes the information that is on the internet is not factual. Sometimes, news stories or websites that are posted online are exaggerated or completely fabricated to make the reader **think** or **feel** a certain way. This can affect the choices that people make and the way that they behave.



**NEWS
FLASH!**

This is called

misinformation



NEWS
FLASH!

This is called

misinformation



This prefix is used to show that something has been
done wrong or badly.





**NEWS
FLASH!**



Omar

Why would someone create a website or write something online which contains **misinformation**?

AJ

People often use misinformation to grab people's attention. They want as many people to read and share it as possible.



NEWS
FLASH!



Olive

Why are they looking for attention?

There can be lots of reasons but they are mainly...



...to make
money from
advertising on
their website.



...to make
someone think a
certain way and to
influence their
actions.



...because they
think it is funny.



**NEWS
FLASH!**



Let's look at some of the websites you have found and we can explore some simple ways to spot possible **misinformation**.



What makes a trustworthy website?

A screenshot of a Google search results page for the query "climate change". The browser's address bar shows "google.com/search". The Google logo is on the left, and the search bar contains "climate change". Below the search bar are tabs for "All", "News", "Images", "Videos", "Books", and "More". The results show "About 673,000,000 results (0.79 seconds)". The first result is from "https://climate.nasa.gov" with the title "Evidence | Facts – Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet" and a snippet about global temperature rise. The second result is from "https://www.bbc.co.uk" with the title "What is climate change? A really simple guide - BBC News" and a snippet dated 18 Nov 2020. The third result is from "https://jerrysthoughts.net" with the title "Global Warming Fraud Exposed In Pictures" and a snippet dated 12 Dec 2016. The fourth result is from "https://www.newsnet.blogspot.com" with the title "90 Scientists: Global Warming Is a Total Hoax" and a snippet dated 5 Mar 2019.



Here are Google's Top 4 results for the term 'Climate Change'.

Look at them carefully.

Which sites do you think are more likely to be trustworthy?

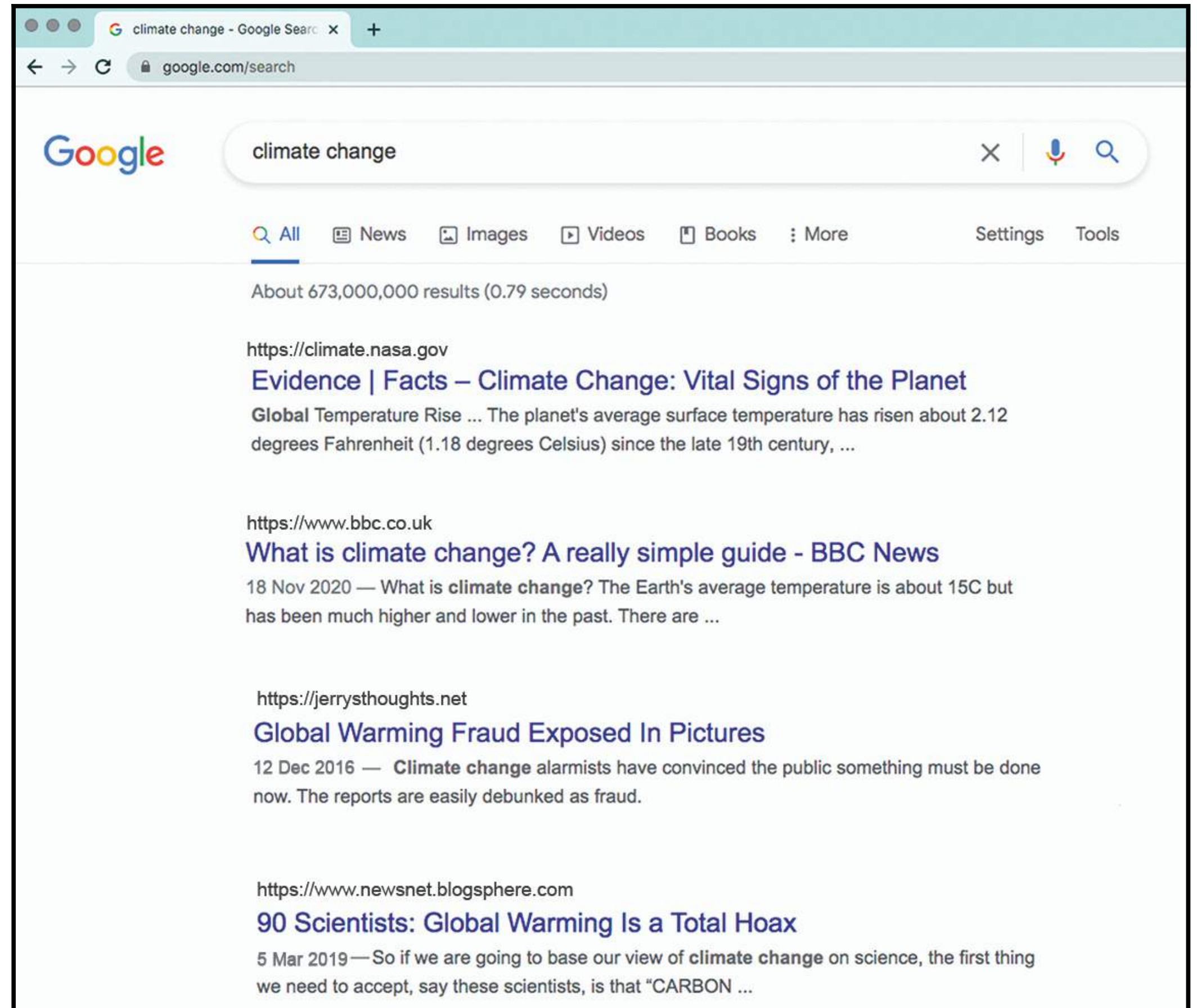
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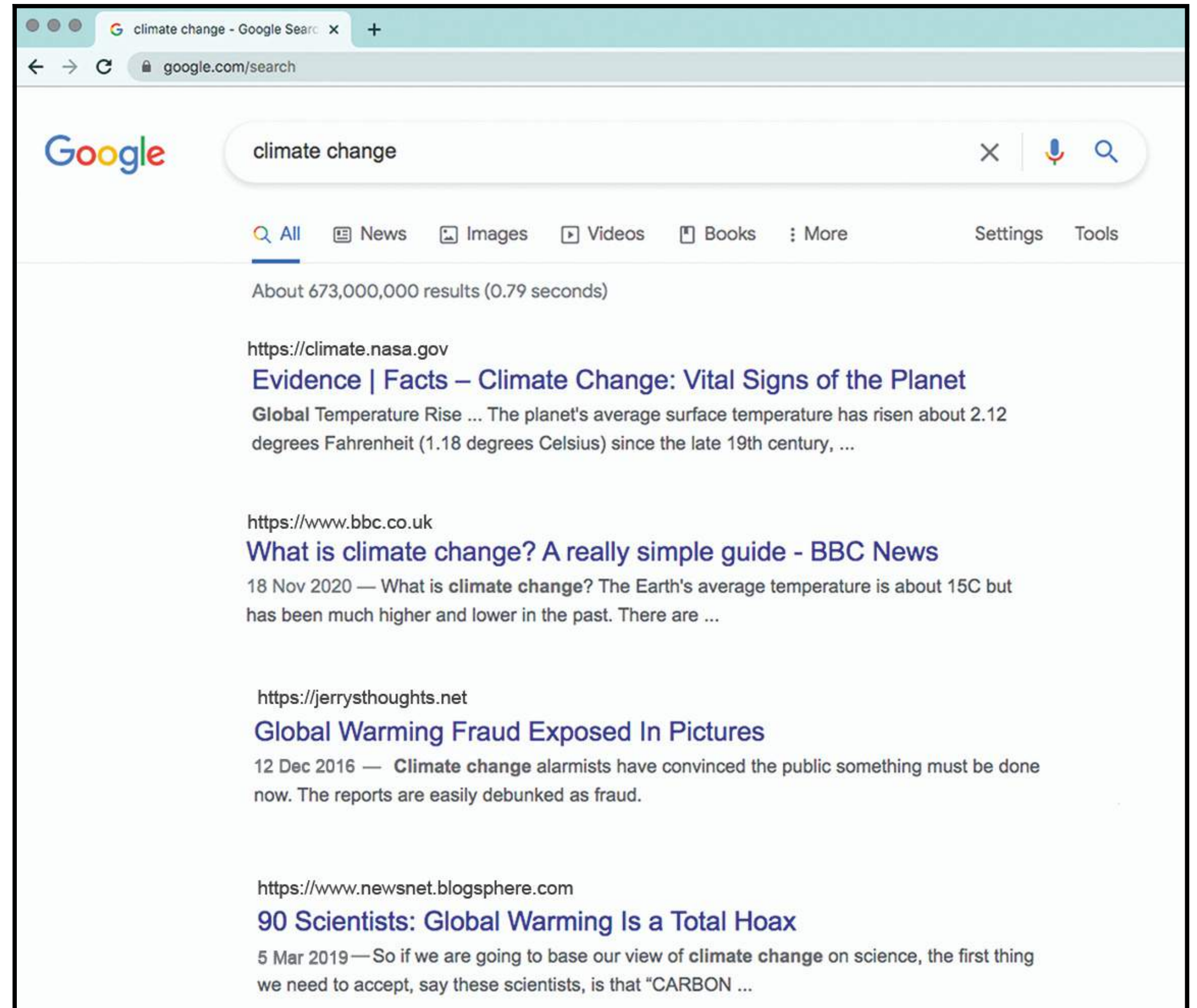
If these websites are coming up as part of a Google search then they must all be trustworthy!

Right?





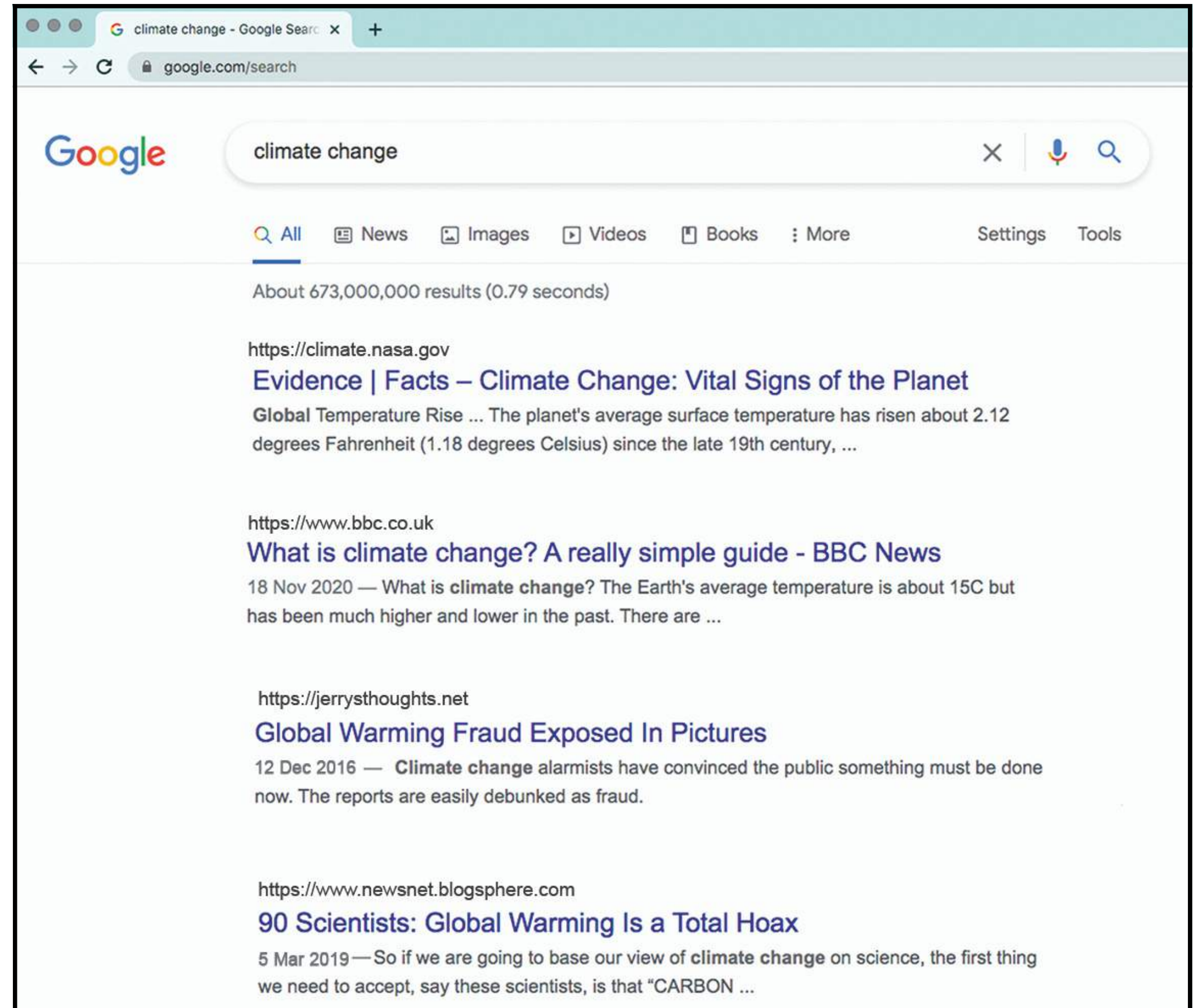
Not necessarily! Google uses a series of clever, specialist algorithms to find and rank websites. It uses indicators such as **freshness of content, popularity** or **how many other sites link to it** but it cannot always tell whether or not a site is trustworthy.





This means that we still need to choose which websites we read very carefully, even if they are on a Google Results page!

Let's learn how we can tell which sites are more likely to be trustworthy.



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Is it from a
well-known,
reliable
organisation?

climate change - Google Search x +

google.com/search

Google climate change X Voice Search

All News Images Videos Books More Settings Tools

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NASA and the
BBC are
trusted,
regulated
organisations.

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Is it from a
well-known,
reliable
organisation?



These are both
Blogs which
are personal
and opinion-
based.

NEWS
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Does the URL
look official
or
educational?

climate change - Google Search x +

google.com/search

Google climate change

All News Images Videos Books More Settings Tools

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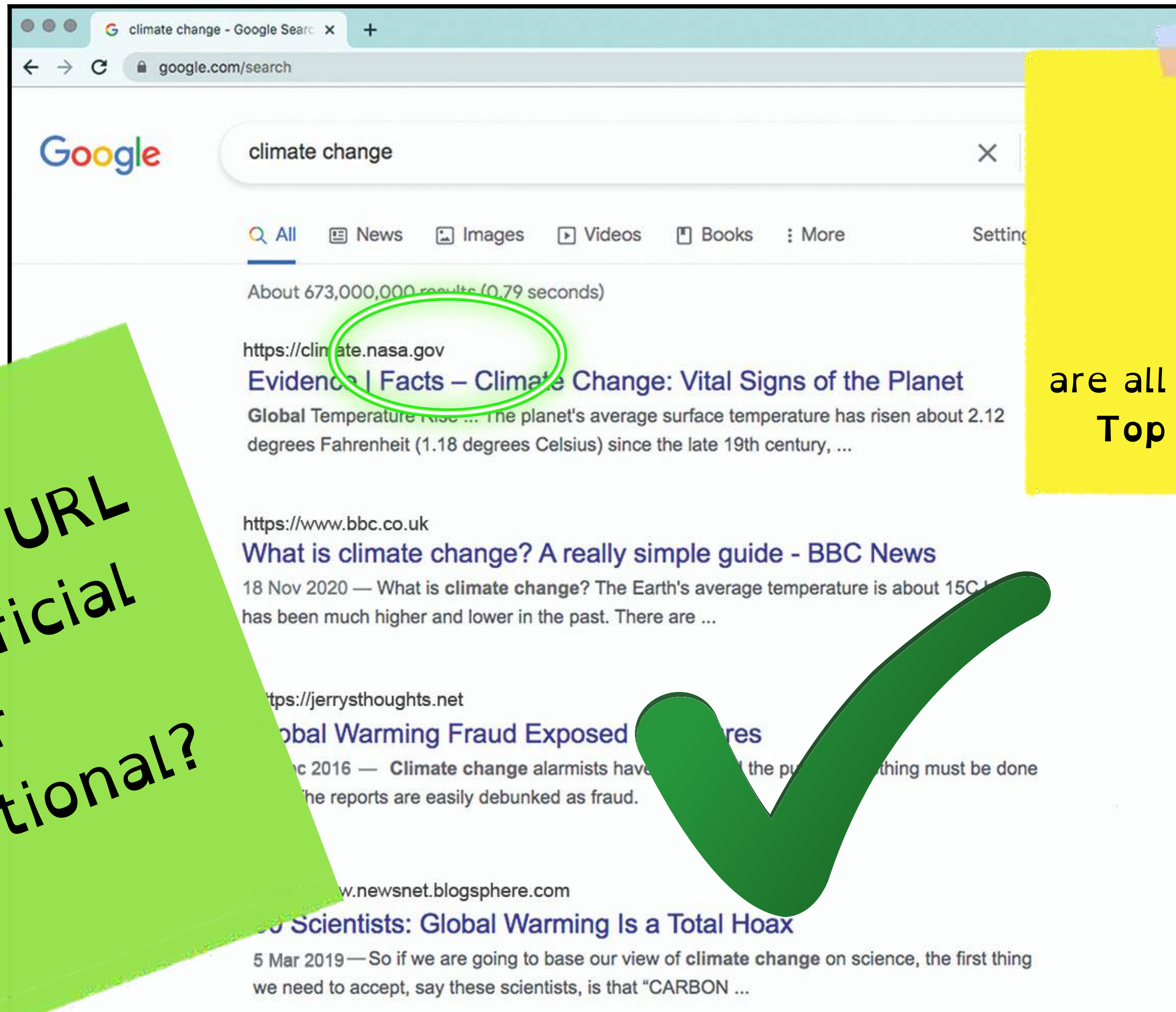
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Does the URL
look official
or
educational?

.gov
.gov.uk
.edu
.sch.uk
.ac.uk

are all generally reliable
Top Level Domains.

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climate change - Google Search x +

google.com/search

Google

climate change

All News Images Videos Books More

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Websites with

.com
.co.uk
.net
.biz
.shop

could have other agendas and
might not give you clear facts.



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the 'Snippet'?

climate change - Google Search x +

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Google

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All News Images Videos Books More Settings Tools

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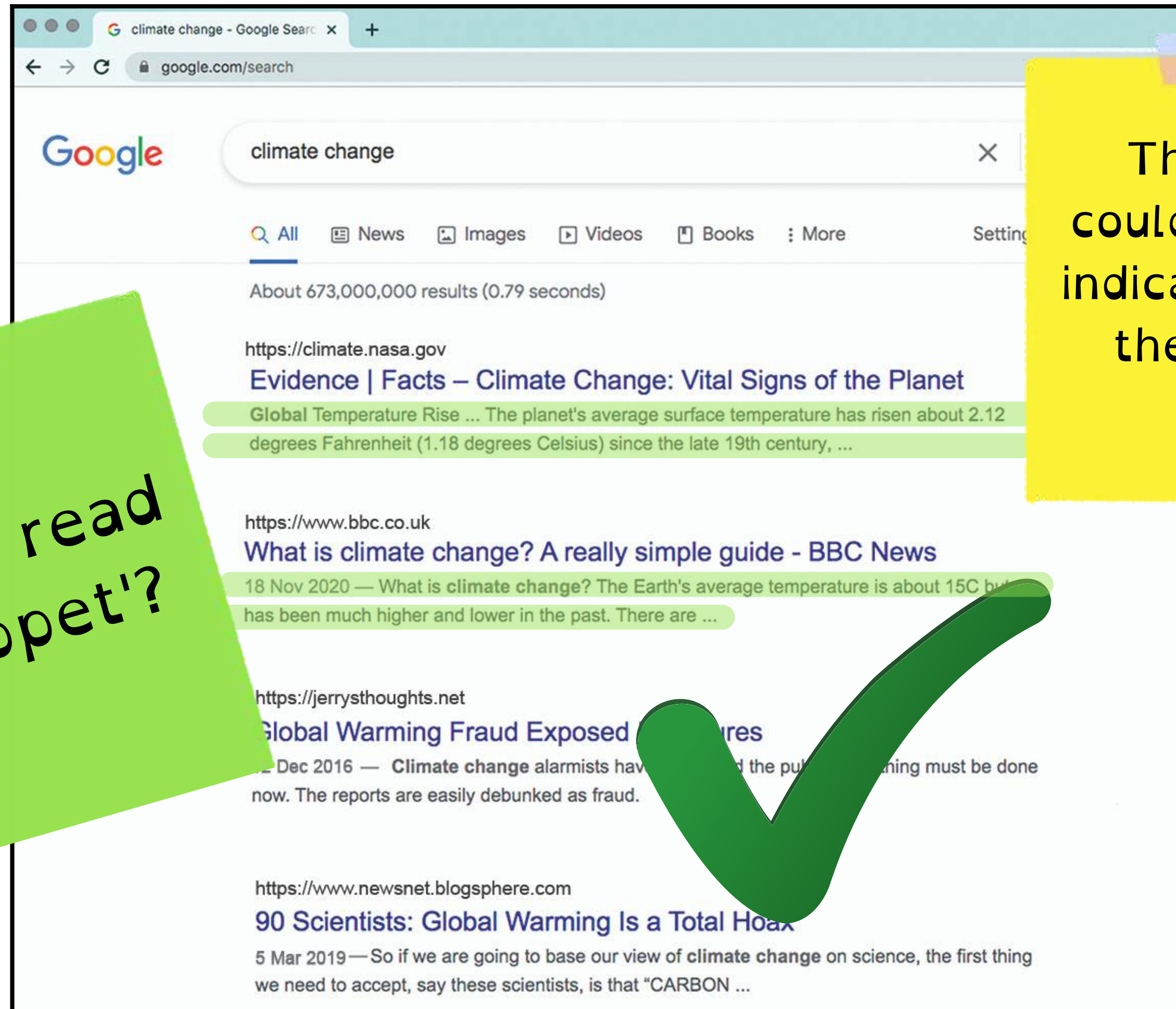
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The 'Snippet' could give you an indication whether the website is factual.

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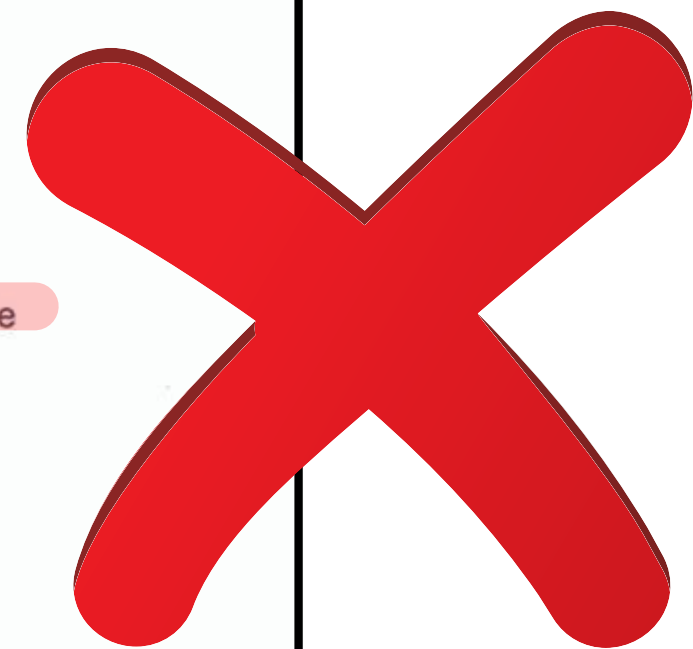
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These Snippets
clearly show that
these websites
are not based on
fact.



Log in | Home

OUR
WORLD
junior

Science

Animals

Climate
Change

Search

All about climate change

by Dr Amanda Smith

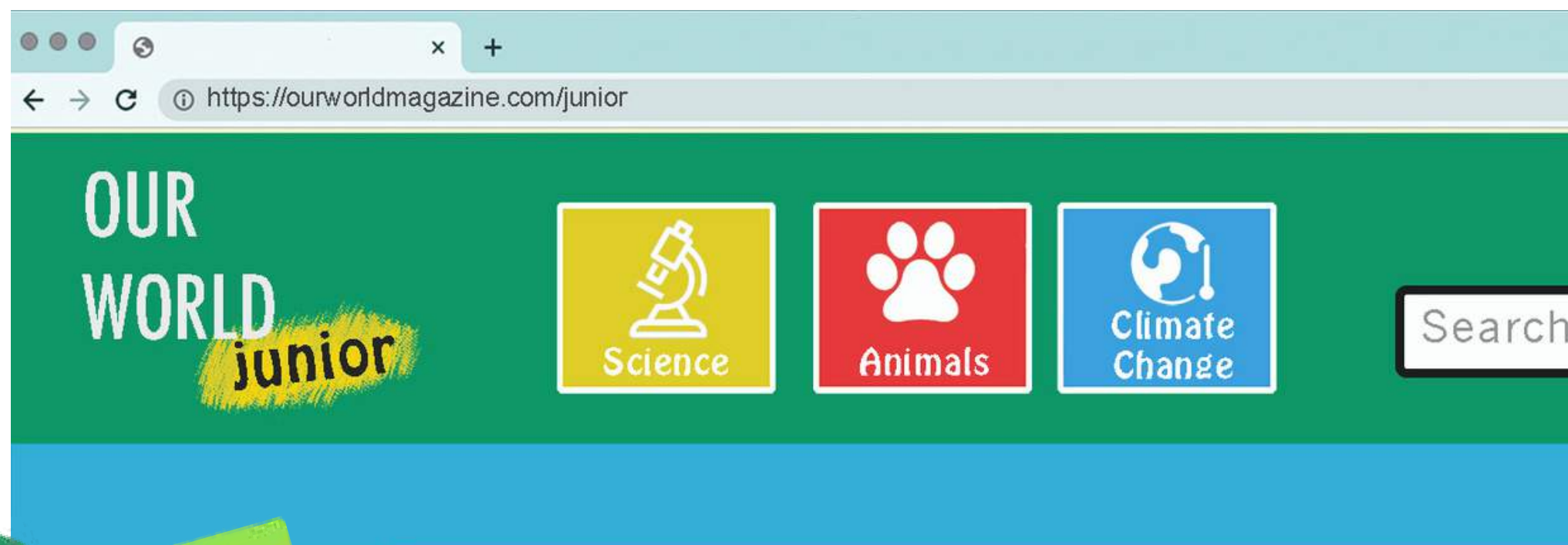
You might have heard about **climate change** in the news, at school, or even at home. But what is it all about? Here's what you need to know.

What is climate change?

The term "climate change" refers to a change in the average conditions -such as temperature or rainfall- in a region over a long period of time.

Disclaimer: This screenshot is fictional and created for educational purposes.

Who has
written it?



This article has been written by Dr Amanda Smith.

This implies that she is an expert.

You could search for her name online to check her qualifications.

Who has written it?

All about climate change

by Dr Amanda Smith

You might have heard about **climate change** in the news, at school, or even at home. But what is it all about? Here's what you need to know.

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https://jerrysthoughts.net

Jerry's Thoughts

A skeptic's writings on the internet

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Wednesday 5 May 2021

10,000 scientists Admit that Climate Change is a Hoax!

Posted by Jerry A.

An online petition stating that climate change is a hoax has now been signed by 10,000 people who say are scientists.

The petition states that climate change, and the (also fake!!!) greenhouse effect were invented to hide the truth.

I have never doubted climate change was a lie, and I am relieved that this is now proven.

Popular posts

World ending:
The prophecy is Real!

Mermaids exist - and there are photos to prove it

This article has been written by **Jerry A.**

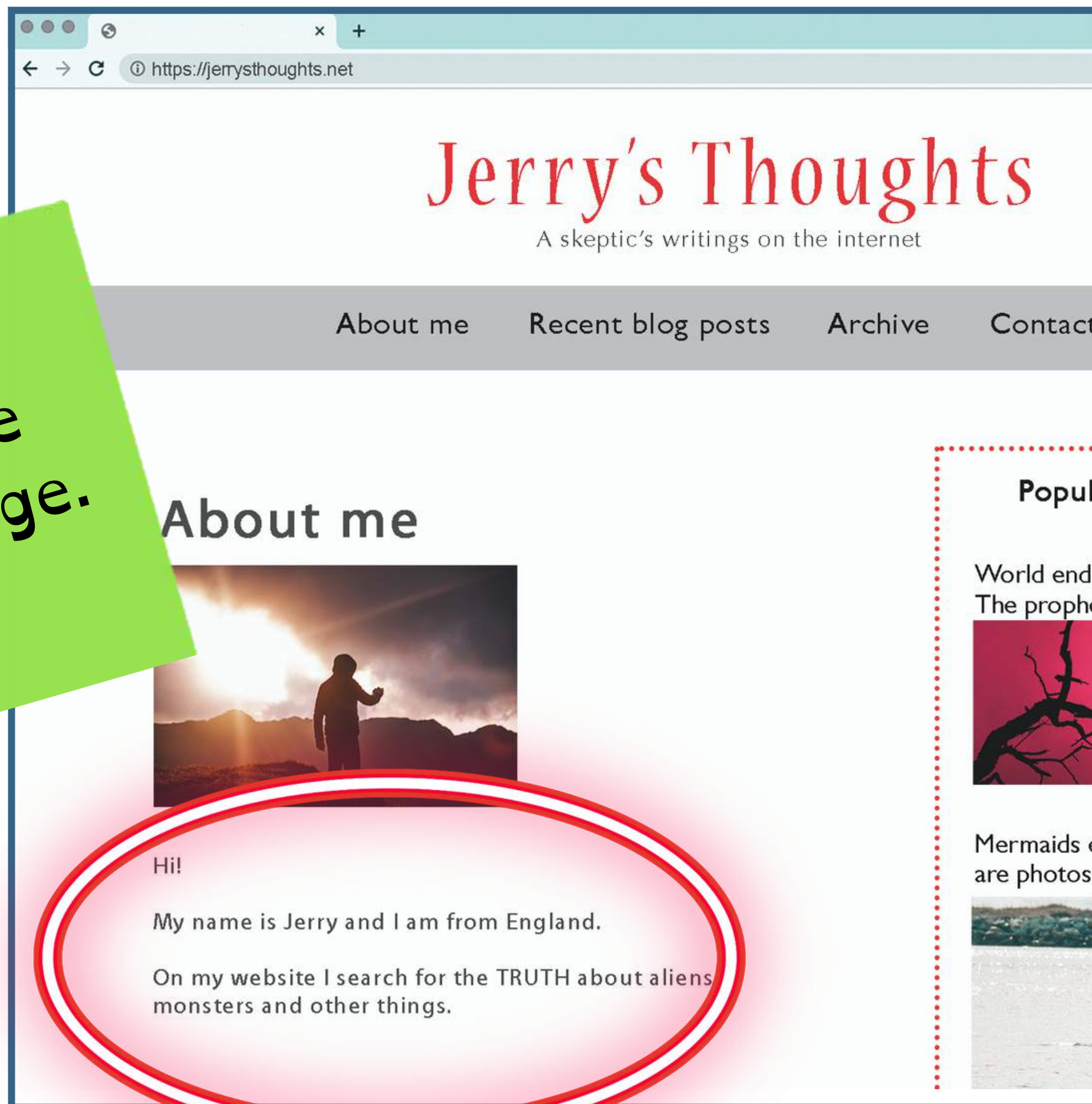
It does not give details any qualifications or expertise that they might have.

Let's check the 'About' page to find out more about them.

Who has
written it?

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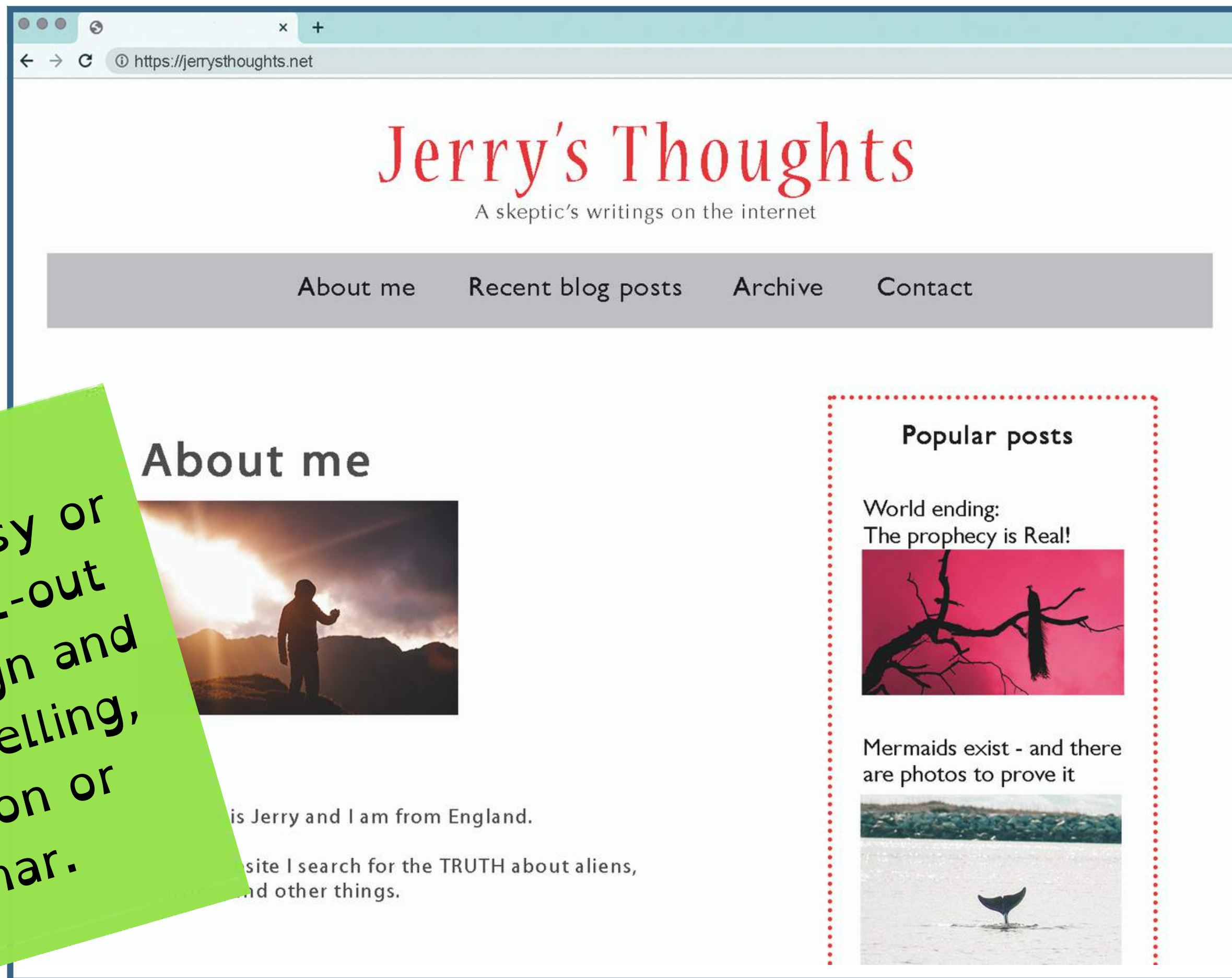
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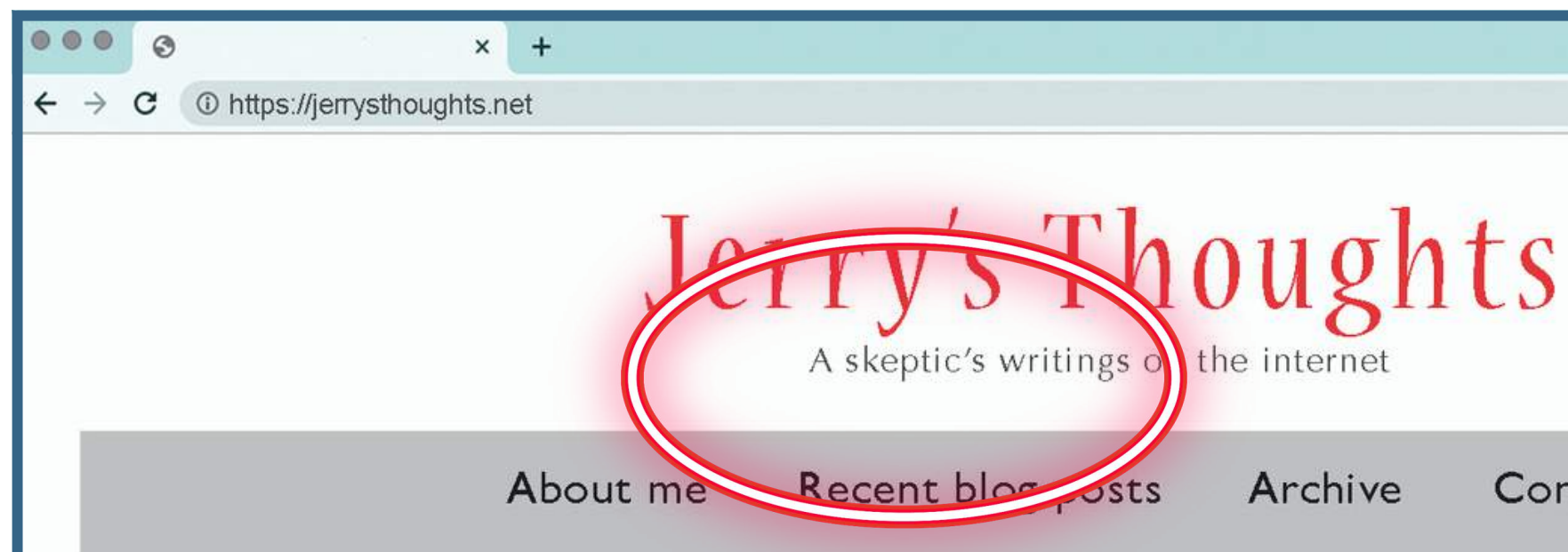
There are a few things to notice here:

1. There is no further information about who is writing or their qualifications.
2. There is no contact information.
3. 'Jerry' clearly doesn't base their ideas on fact.

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FLASH!



If there are mistakes, this can mean that no-one is editing or checking the site before it is posted online.

A poorly-designed website suggests that it has been put together quickly and carelessly and that there is no professional organisation behind it.

Check for messy or badly thought-out website design and errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar

About me



and I am from England.

Search for the TRUTH about aliens, UFOs and other things.

World
The pr



Mermaids exist - and there are photos to prove it



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Use Copy and
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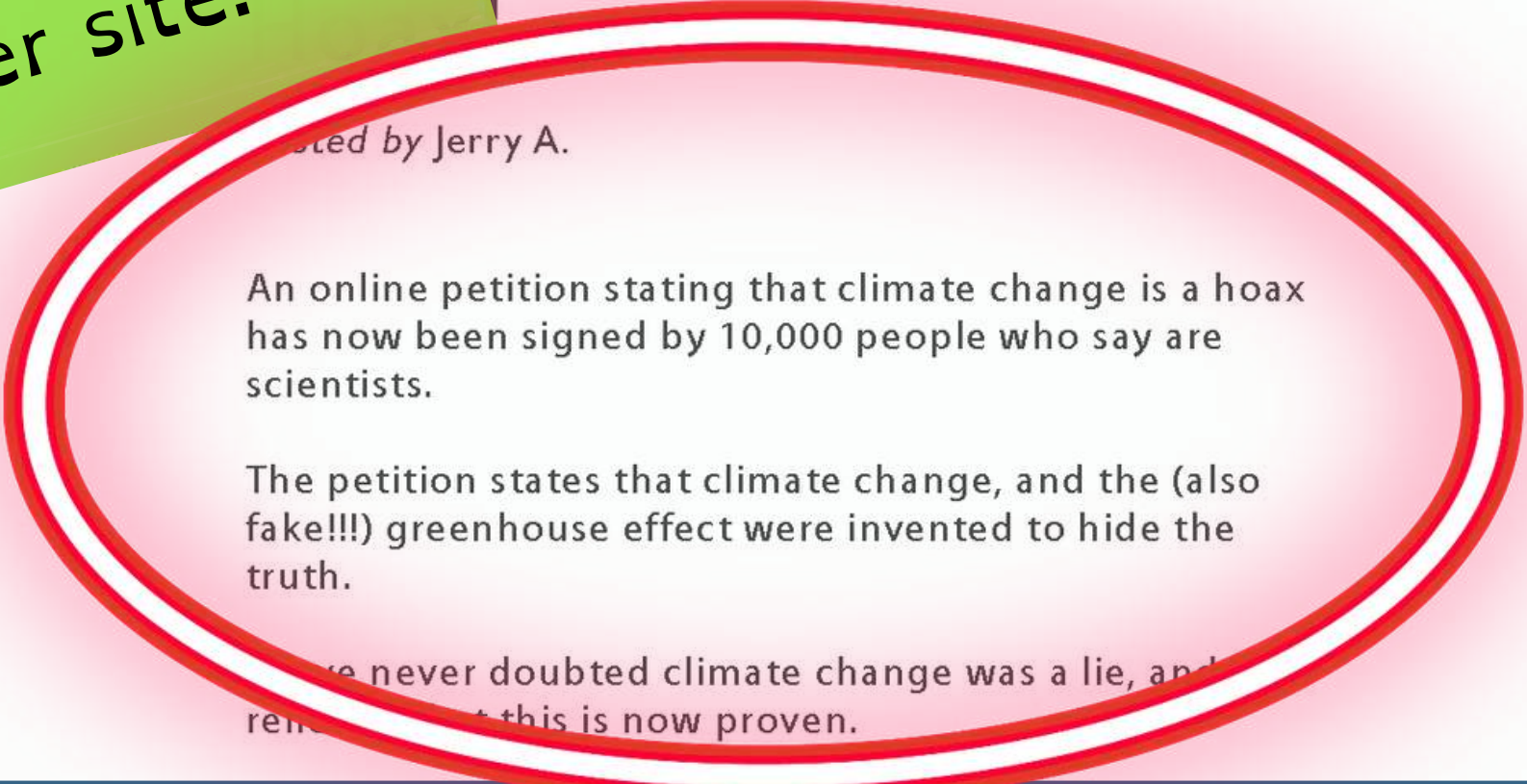
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World
The pro

Mermaids exist - and there are photos to prove it



It is sometimes a good idea to copy sections of the text and paste it into a Search Engine.

This will show you whether these words appear anywhere else online.



Newsi:

Wow! Thanks AJ. That was really useful. Now I know what to look for when deciding whether a website is useful and trustworthy.



AJ:

As long as you stay vigilant and know what to look out for then you will be able to find lots of great facts online!

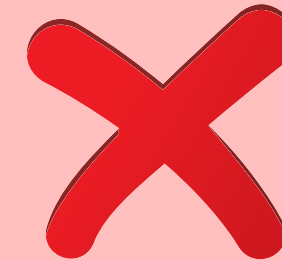


Recap

Let's recap what to look for in a TRUSTWORTHY website or a website that could be UNTRUSTWORTHY.



- From a well-respected organisation
- A URL with a .gov, .gov.uk, .sch.uk, .edu or .ac.uk top domain.
- A Snippet that seems balanced and based on facts.
- A named author, preferably one that has expertise in the area.
- Professional website design.
- Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.



- From a dubious organisation.
- Blogs or personal websites.
- A URL with a .com, .co.uk, .net, .biz, .shop top domain name might require caution.
- A Snippet that shows signs of being opinion-based.
- An anonymous author with no qualifications or proven expertise.
- Messy or unprofessional website design.
- Mistakes in spelling, punctuation or grammar.



Task

Look carefully at the two websites in the Activity Pack.

Pick out the things that make them **TRUSTWORTHY** or **UNTRUSTWORTHY**



Highlight the things that look **TRUSTWORTHY** in one colour.



Label them.



Highlight the things that look **UNTRUSTWORTHY** in a different colour.



Label them.



Be ready to discuss what you have done.



Have you played the



game yet?

Go to www.newsflashgame.org to solve the mystery and uncover the truth!

