



Fake Reviews

Fake reviews have eroded consumer confidence in the quality and reliability of some businesses. It is estimated that approximately 42% of positive reviews are fake, and 85% of customers believe that some ratings and reviews are fake.

Companies are paying "paid-review farms" and "fake review networks" and offering incentives to customers and others to post fake reviews in order to create a false sense of consumer confidence in their businesses.

On the opposite side of that coin, some corporations and businesses have been taking steps to try to combat fake reviews. In 2022, [Amazon filed a lawsuit](#) against administrators of more than 10,000 Facebook groups it accuses of coordinating fake reviews in exchange for money or free products.

In order to try to combat the extensive problem of fake reviews, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued new rules on August 14, 2024, that will combat fake reviews and testimonials by prohibiting their sale or purchase and allow the agency to seek civil penalties against known violators.

The new rules took effect in October of 2024.

Fake reviews are a massive, well-organized problem affecting billions of dollars in consumer purchases. Time will tell if the new FTC rules will make an impact.



It is estimated that approximately 42% of positive reviews are fake.

FTC passed a new law in 2024 that will combat fake reviews and testimonials by prohibiting their sale or purchase and allow the agency to seek civil penalties against known violators.

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

The Federal Trade Commission announced new rules that will allow them to strengthen enforcement, seek civil penalties against violators, and deter AI-generated fake reviews.

The Federal Trade Commission today **announced a final rule** that will combat fake reviews and testimonials by prohibiting their sale or purchase and allow the agency to seek civil penalties against knowing violators.

“Fake reviews not only waste people’s time and money, but also pollute the marketplace and divert business away from honest competitors,” said FTC Chair Lina M. Khan. “By strengthening the FTC’s toolkit to fight deceptive advertising, the final rule will protect Americans from getting cheated, put businesses that unlawfully game the system on notice, and promote markets that are fair, honest, and competitive.”

The final rule prohibits:

- **Fake or False Consumer Reviews, Consumer Testimonials, and Celebrity Testimonials:** The final rule addresses reviews and testimonials that misrepresent that they are by someone who does not exist, such as AI-generated fake reviews, or who did not have actual experience with the business or its products or services, or that misrepresent the experience of the person giving it. It prohibits businesses from creating or selling such reviews or testimonials. It also prohibits them from buying such reviews, procuring them from company insiders, or disseminating such testimonials, when the business knew or should have known that the reviews or testimonials were fake or false.
- **Buying Positive or Negative Reviews:** The final rule prohibits businesses from providing compensation or other incentives conditioned on the writing of consumer reviews expressing a particular sentiment, either positive or negative. It clarifies that the conditional nature of the offer of compensation or incentive may be expressly or implicitly conveyed.
- **Insider Reviews and Consumer Testimonials:** The final rule prohibits certain reviews and testimonials written by company insiders that fail to clearly and conspicuously disclose the giver's material connection to the business. It prohibits such reviews and testimonials given by officers or managers. It also prohibits a business from disseminating such a testimonial that the business should have known was by an officer, manager, employee, or agent. Finally, it imposes requirements when officers or managers solicit consumer reviews from their own immediate relatives or from employees or agents – or when they tell employees or agents to solicit reviews from relatives and such solicitations result in reviews by immediate relatives of the employees or agents.
- **Company-Controlled Review Websites:** The final rule prohibits a business from misrepresenting that a website or entity it controls provides independent reviews or opinions about a category of products or services that includes its own products or services.
- **Review Suppression:** The final rule prohibits a business from using unfounded or groundless legal threats, physical threats, intimidation, or certain false public accusations to prevent or remove a negative consumer review. The final rule also bars a business from misrepresenting that the reviews on a review portion of its website represent all or most of the reviews submitted when reviews have been suppressed based upon their ratings or negative sentiment.
- **Misuse of Fake Social Media Indicators:** The final rule prohibits anyone from selling or buying fake indicators of social media influence, such as followers or views generated by a bot or hijacked account. This prohibition is limited to situations in which the buyer knew or should have known that the indicators were fake and misrepresent the buyer's influence or importance for a commercial purpose.

Source: Federal Trade Commission Announces Final Rule Banning Fake Reviews and Testimonials, [announced by the FTC on August 14, 2025.](#)

Time

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to supercharge global e-commerce, this kind of fraud (fake reviews) emerged as one of the most significant factors contributing to an erosion of consumer confidence in the online marketplace.

Fake reviews influenced around \$152 billion in global spending on lackluster products and services last year, according to a [report](#) from the World Economic Forum.

The world of online reviews is so overrun with fakes, it's become like the Wild West, Dean says. "There's no repercussions," she says. "There's no penalties. Cheating is rewarded in the current environment."

Paid-review farms have sprung up around the world, providing their services to businesses paying to falsely boost their ratings on review platforms.

Highly-organized, largely off-shore fake review networks frequently use sites like Facebook, Craigslist, and Reddit to advertise and sell their deceptive practices to businesses. Dean says there's a "tremendous amount" of review fraud being facilitated on social media.

Source: Inside the War on Fake Consumer Reviews, written by Megan McCluskey, published on July 6, 2022, on [TIME.com](#).

United Kingdom issued new rules against fake reviews

In April of 2022, the United Kingdom announced new rules to crack down on fake reviews, making it clearly illegal to pay someone to write or host a fake review, so people are not cheated by bogus ratings

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) will be able to directly enforce consumer law, including new powers to fine firms up to 10% of their global turnover for mistreating customers.

Source; [New rules to protect consumers' hard-earned cash](#), published on Wired-Gov.net website, on April 21, 2022.

American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons (AAHKS)

It is important to understand that not all physician rating websites are created equal, and the quality and control of information can vary dramatically. Some websites ask only a few questions and use star rating systems but don't allow for comments while other sites ask a lot of questions and allow comments.

There is no regulation of these websites currently and the process of reviews can be easily manipulated or falsified. There many known examples of people who are not actual patients of

the physician posing as patients (e.g. friends and family, disgruntled employees, someone seeking to damage the physician's reputation, etc.) to give glowing or horrible reviews.

There is currently no way for these websites to verify the patient was treated by the physician being reviewed despite some sites advertising claims to the contrary.

Many of the websites will have inaccurate or outdated information regarding physicians, and not all physicians in your area may be listed.

Source: American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons ([AAHKS website](#)).

Forbes

In the annual [customer experience research](#) by Forbes, they found that 85% of U.S. customers say ratings and reviews help them decide if they want to make a purchase. That's almost nine out of 10 customers!

However, that same number of customers (85%) also believe that some ratings and reviews are fake. While not all ratings and reviews are fake, the number of dishonest reviews has become a problem. [RetailWire's recent article](#) about how Amazon is fighting back against fake reviews with strict policies and technology is an important place to learn how top online brands deal with the problem. The article also cites research from Fakespot estimating that 42% of Amazon reviews are fake.

It's important to note that the fake reviews are not Amazon's attempt to persuade consumers. On the contrary, the company is waging a war against fake reviews with stricter policies and proactive detection.

Fake reviews come in several different forms:

- Friends, company employees or others—not customers—are asked to leave reviews.
- Customers are bribed, like I was, to leave a positive review.
- Companies take down negative reviews and only leave the good ones.

Our annual research found that 76% of customers are skeptical about the authenticity of reviews if they are all positive, and 30% of customers say they won't purchase from a company that doesn't have any negative reviews.

So, what's a company to do?

The Forbes article provided a few suggestions, including:

- **Respond to Negative Reviews:** If most reviews are good, having a bad one isn't going to hurt, especially if the company responds to it. A good response from a company can actually improve customer trust. Use negative reviews as opportunities to demonstrate good customer service. (And do not use scripted or AI-generated responses where you just keep repeating the same empty, meaningless verbiage.)

- **Respond to Positive Reviews:** We coach our clients to respond to all reviews, not just negative ones. Depending on how many you get, this can seem like a daunting task. But if someone takes the time to leave a lengthy message of positive feedback, give them the respect of a response.
- **Don't Game the System:** Offering bribes and incentives for positive reviews crosses an ethical line. And, taking down negative reviews is, in effect, lying to your customers.
- **Do Not Delete your Review Pages and Start New Pages** (such as on Google Maps or Yelp). When some companies get a lot of negative reviews, they will delete their pages and start over. Take accountability. Improve your business practices. Pay fair wages. Train your employees. Treat customers, clients, patients, etc. with respect and dignity.

As the research shows, customers don't trust the "perfect" company. But they do trust and appreciate the authentic company. The best way to get excellent reviews isn't to buy them or game the system. It's to earn them!!

Source: The Dark Side Of Five-Star Reviews: Why Customers Don't Trust Perfect Ratings, published January 26, 2025, [Forbes article](#).

Associated Press

Phony reviews have long plagued many popular consumer websites, [such as Amazon and Yelp](#). They are typically traded on private social media groups between fake review brokers and businesses willing to pay. Sometimes, such reviews are initiated by businesses that offer customers incentives such as gift cards for positive feedback.

But AI-infused text generation tools, popularized by OpenAI's [ChatGPT](#), enable fraudsters to produce reviews faster and in greater volume, according to tech industry experts.

Fake reviews are found across a wide range of industries, from e-commerce, lodging and restaurants, to services such as home repairs, [medical care](#) and piano lessons.

- A Seattle-area plastic surgery provider [accused of threatening patients over negative reviews](#) and posting fake positive ones must pay \$5 million to the state attorney general's office and thousands of Washington patients, according to a federal consent decree.
- In January of 2022, the FTC [reached a settlement with Fashion Nova](#). From late 2015 until November 2019, Fashion Nova never approved or posted hundreds of thousands of lower-starred reviews

Consumers can try to [spot fake reviews](#) by watching out for a few possible warning signs. Here are a few examples of possible warning signs:

Panagram Labs says reviews written with AI are typically longer, highly structured and include “empty descriptors,” such as generic phrases and attributes. The writing also tends to include cliches like “the first thing that struck me” and “game-changer.”

Beware of recommendations that read like product manuals. Reviews that repeat the full product name or model number may be an attempt to game the search engine system. And if they use excessive technical or marketing jargon, odds are they aren't providing a genuine review – most real people don't talk like that.

Check out the profile of the person providing the review. If they only write reviews for a particular company, that's a huge warning sign they could have a vested interest in that business.

Source: The internet is filled with fake reviews. Here are some ways to spot them, written by Haleluya Hadero, published on December 23, 2024, on [APNews.com](#).

Source: How to spot a fake online review, written by Sarah Skidmore Sell, on October 20, 2015, on [APNews.com](#).

Source: The FTC Says Fashion Nova Suppressed Negative Online Reviews. Now It's Putting Other Companies on Notice, written by Megan McClusky, published on February 23, 2022, on [TIME.com](#).

FAIR USE NOTICE: This site may contain copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance the understanding of environmental, political, human rights, economic, democracy, scientific and social justice issues, and to provide a public service to consumers so they can make informed decisions about their choice of hospitals and surgeons. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes.

DISCLAIMER: The contents of this website (including text, graphics and images) are for informational purposes only and do not constitute medical advice. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read on this website.

@2026 All Rights Reserved