

STRATEGY

DISMISS

"Attack the Messenger,
Not the Message"



WHAT IS IT

The Dismiss tactic rejects information by discrediting the person or organization sharing it – without addressing the actual difficult truths.



WARNING SIGNS

- **Source Attacks:** "You can't trust them – they're biased"
- **Credibility Undermining:** "They have a hidden agenda"
- **Blanket Denials:** "That's completely false" (with no explanation)
- **Labeling Critics:** "They're just foreign agents/spies"
- **Conspiracy Accusations:** "This is a plot against our country"



EXAMPLE

Our journalists report on civilian casualties, during a foreign invasion. Their Response: *"These journalists are all biased against us. Their reports are fabricated propaganda designed to make us look bad. They use paid actors to stage scenes of destruction."*

Instead of addressing the evidence of civilian harm, they attack the messengers' credibility.



BUILD YOUR SHIELD

- ✓ Separate the message from the messenger
Focus on the evidence being presented
- ✓ Look for verification from multiple sources
If several different sources report similar information, dismissals become less credible
- ✓ Watch for specific vs. general denials
Vague dismissals without specific counterpoints are a red flag
- ✓ Consider who benefits from the dismissal
Ask why someone doesn't want you to believe the information

REMEMBER

Those with nothing to hide address evidence directly. Foreign actors using the Dismiss tactic avoid engaging with the actual evidence because they can't refute it with facts.

STRATEGY

DISTORT

"Twist the Facts to Fit the Narrative"



WHAT IS IT

The Distort tactic manipulates real information to create a false impression. They justify their actions by twisting facts and presenting misleading context.



WARNING SIGNS

- **Cherry-picking:** Selecting only facts that support one side
- **Missing Context:** Presenting facts without important background
- **Misleading Statistics:** Using real numbers in misleading ways
- **Altered Images/Videos:** Subtle changes to real content
- **False Comparisons:** Comparing unlike things as if they are the same



EXAMPLE

When a country invades its neighbor and faces international criticism, the country's media claims: *"We are conducting a special operation to protect ethnic minorities from genocide. Here are videos of our soldiers helping children and elderly people in the conflict zone."*

They twist facts by using misleading terms (special operations), false claims (genocide), and selective stories to hide the full picture.



BUILD YOUR SHIELD

- ✓ Seek the complete picture
Ask what information might be missing
- ✓ Check multiple international sources
Compare coverage from different countries
- ✓ Look for original context
Images and quotes can be presented in misleading ways
- ✓ Be alert to emotional framing
Emotional appeals often mask factual weaknesses

REMEMBER

Context matters. Foreign influence campaigns using the Distort tactic rely on hiding the background information to disguise the misrepresentation.

STRATEGY

DISTRACT

"Look Over There!
How Horrible!"



WHAT IS IT

The Distract tactic shifts attention away from important issues. They divert focus from their controversial actions by creating unrelated controversies.



WARNING SIGNS

- **Whataboutism:** "But what about what other countries have done?"
- **Topic Switching:** Sudden changes in subject when pressed on a topic
- **Information Flooding:** Overwhelming with too much information
- **False Urgency:** Creating emergency situations to divert attention
- **Controversy Creation:** Manufacturing outrage over minor issues



EXAMPLE

When a country faces accusations of targeting civilians, the country's officials respond: "*What about the bombing campaigns conducted by other countries in the Middle East? Also, we've uncovered a plot by foreign agents to deploy biological weapons near our border.*"

Instead of addressing civilian casualties, they flood the conversation with unrelated issues and accusations.



BUILD YOUR SHIELD

- ✓ Stay focused on the original issue
Keep returning to the main concern
- ✓ Recognize whataboutism
Other wrongdoing doesn't justify the current action
- ✓ Question the timing
Be skeptical when new controversies emerge during criticism
- ✓ Track consistency
Notice patterns of distracting whenever certain topics arise

REMEMBER

Stay focused on what matters. The Distract tactic works when people forget what the original issue was and chase after new, often manufactured controversies.

STRATEGY

DISMAY

"Rule Through Fear"



WHAT IS IT

The Dismay tactic uses fear, intimidation, and threats to silence opposition. They use this to prevent criticism of their actions by creating an atmosphere of fear.



WARNING SIGNS

- **Exaggerated Threats:** Predictions of extreme consequences
- **Intimidation:** Threats against those who speak out
- **Fear Amplification:** Making risks seem larger than they actually are
- **Apocalyptic Language:** Warnings of impending disaster or conflict
- **Public Punishment:** Making examples of critics



EXAMPLE

When journalists report on a country's military misconduct, the country's officials warn: *"Anyone spreading false information about our military operations will face severe legal consequences. We consider such reporting an act of hostility that threatens global stability. Nuclear conflict could result from continued provocations."*

They use fear—threats, punishments, and doomsday warnings—to silence critics and stop people from questioning their actions.



BUILD YOUR SHIELD

- ✓ **Assess real risks**
Separate realistic threats from exaggerations
- ✓ **Recognize fear language**
Notice words designed to trigger emotional responses
- ✓ **Consider who benefits**
Ask who gains power when people are afraid
- ✓ **Support independent journalism**
Media outlets with diverse funding are less vulnerable to threats

REMEMBER

Fear is a control tool. The Dismay tactic relies on emotional responses preventing people from thinking critically about the information provided.

STRATEGY

DIVIDE

"Turn People Against Each Other"



WHAT IS IT

The Divide tactic exploits existing tensions between groups. They use this to weaken opposition to their actions by turning different groups against each other.



WARNING SIGNS

- **Us vs. Them Language:** Framing issues as battles between groups
- **Exploiting Sensitive Topics:** Using race, religion, or politics to divide
- **Amplifying Extremists:** Highlighting the most radical voices
- **False Polarization:** Suggesting only two positions on complex issues
- **Stirring Resentment:** Emphasizing grievances between communities



EXAMPLE

When a country faces criticism for its military aggression, the country's influence campaign: "*Conservative citizens should question why their liberal government wants to send your tax dollars to foreign countries instead of helping people at home. This conflict isn't your problem.*"

They fuel division by playing groups against each other with inflammatory messages, extreme portrayals, and targeted blame—so people fight each other instead of questioning them.



BUILD YOUR SHIELD

- ✓ Look for common ground
Most people share core values despite disagreements
- ✓ Question extreme portrayals
Few groups are as radical as they're portrayed
- ✓ Verify inflammatory content
Check if divisive content comes from authentic sources
- ✓ Consider who benefits
Ask who gains advantage when domestic groups fight each other

REMEMBER

United communities are harder to manipulate. The Divide tactic works by keeping people focused on fighting each other instead of holding foreign actors accountable.

PATTERN

CIRRUS

"Feather-Light Scouts of Tomorrow's Weather"



WHAT IS IT

CIRRUS clouds float more than 6km above the ground, where water vapor freezes into tiny ice threads. They sweep across the sky like brushstrokes and often appear a day or so before gentle rain arrives.



SKY CLUES

- **Feather-thin:** Very thin, hair-like streaks that look almost transparent
- **High and sharp:** Clouds appear distant with crisp edges
- **Horse-tail fans:** Long wisps that point the way the upper wind blows
- **Early arrivals:** Show up a day or so before rain clouds move in
- **Soft halo:** Sometimes give the Sun or Moon a gentle, milky glow



EXAMPLE

It's Sunday evening and you plan an outdoor coffee catch-up for Monday. You glance up and notice fine white threads sliding slowly across the blue. Remembering what you learned about cirrus, you pack a small umbrella in your bag.

When light showers start during lunch, you stay dry while friends dash under shop awnings.



SKY-WATCHING TIPS

- ✓ **Thumb test**
Stretch out one arm—if a cloud strand looks thinner than your thumb nail, it's probably cirrus.
- ✓ **Check color**
Put on sunglasses; cirrus stays just as bright because it's made of ice, not water droplets.
- ✓ **Follow the flow**
Which way do the "tails" point? The upper-air wind direction is often the path of tomorrow's weather.
- ✓ **Keep a quick note**
Write down the sky type and what happens the next day; patterns start to pop out within a week.

REMEMBER

Cirrus clouds are the sky's early-warning postcards. By learning to spot these crystal ribbons, you can plan with a little more confidence—no apps, charts or science degree required.