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Facebook and WhatsApp show the wrong preview of your site

On-Page SEO & Yoast

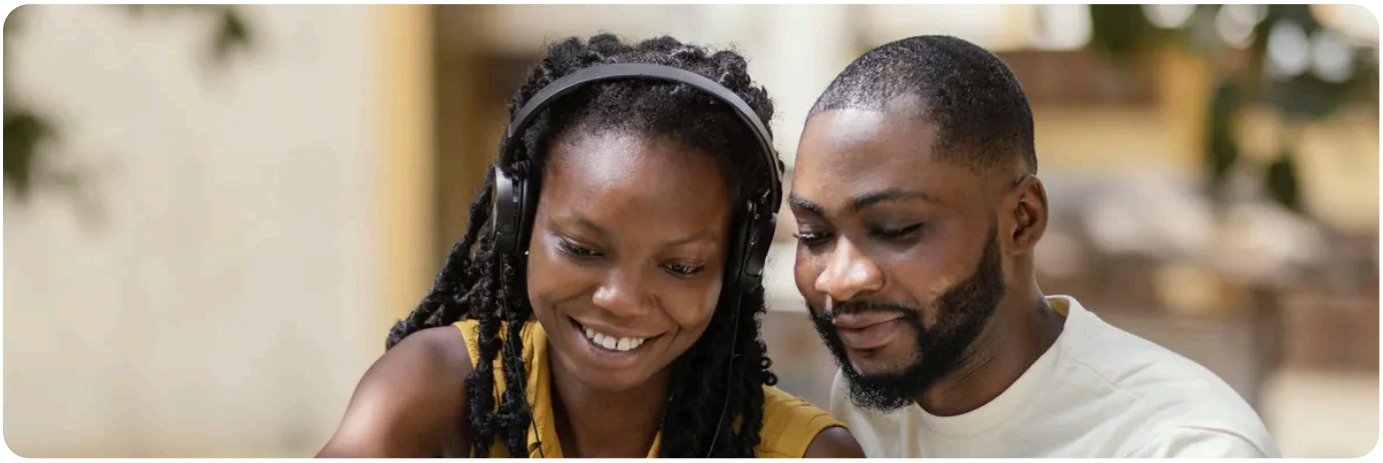
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Facebook and WhatsApp show the wrong preview of your site

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You changed the site, shared the link, and up came the old title with the old image. Sometimes an image you never chose. Sometimes no image at all. Nothing is broken and the site is fine: what is stale is the **copy the social network kept**.

What happens when you paste a link

The network does not show your site. It sends a program of its own to fetch the page, reads a handful of tags hidden in the HTML head, builds the card from them and **stores it**. Next time anyone pastes the same link, it shows what it stored, without going back to your site.

Tag	What it decides
og:title	The card's headline. Not necessarily the page title, which is why changing the title does not change the share.
og:description	The two lines underneath. Missing, the network invents something from the page text, and usually picks badly.
og:image	The picture. The one that causes the most trouble, and it has its own section below.
og:url	The canonical address. Wrong, or pointing elsewhere, and the network files your share under that other address.
og:type	Says whether it is an article, a site, a product. Changes the card shape on some networks.
twitter:card and twitter:image	Some networks prefer their own tags when present. When absent, they fall back to the `og:` ones.

WhatsApp reads the same `og:` tags.
There are no WhatsApp tags. If the card is right on Facebook and wrong on WhatsApp, the site is not different: the two stored copies are simply from different moments.

First: see what the site is actually saying

1. Open the page in a **private window** and view the page source (on desktop browsers, `Ctrl` + `U`; on Mac, `Cmd` + `Alt` + `U`).

2. Search for `og:`. If you find nothing, the network's cache is not your problem: the page declares nothing and the network is guessing.

3. If you find them, read them. If they still hold the old text, it is the site that lagged behind and the network is only repeating it.

4. Copy the address inside `og:image` and paste it into the address bar, in a private window. **It has to show the image.** If it asks for a password, errors, or does not open, the network cannot fetch it either.

The image: the rules you cannot see

Rule	Why
The address must be absolute	Starting with `https://`. A relative path works for a browser already on the site, and fails for a program arriving from outside.
It must be reachable by everyone	Behind a password, on a closed staging site, or at an address that only works for a signed-in visitor, the network never gets there.
Hotlink protection may be blocking it	cPanel has a tool that stops other sites using your images. The social network's fetcher also comes from outside, and also runs into that rule. If you turned it on, check this first.
It must be an image, not a page	If the address returns HTML, or redirects somewhere else, the card comes out with no picture.
One image per page, declared on the page	It is the rule we follow on our own pages: each one declares its own, instead of relying on an inheritance that may not exist. More work once, and no empty card ever.

If the card shows the theme's logo instead of your image
, the page declares no `og:image` and the network grabbed the first picture it found. Clearing caches will not fix that: declaring the tag will.

Making the network read it again

Every network keeps its own copy, and every network has its own way of refreshing it. There is no single button.

1. **Start on your own side.** With a page cache or a middleman in front, the network may be receiving the old HTML. Clear yours first: **clearing the cache**. Refreshing at the network before that just stores the old version again.

2. **Confirm in a private window** that the public page already carries the new tags. Only then ask the network to re-read.

3. **Use the network's own debugging tool.** The big networks have, in their developer centre, a page where you paste a link and tell it to fetch again. Search their developer help for "sharing debugger" or "post inspector". We do not print the addresses here because they move.

4. **The trick that works on any network:** add any parameter to the link, for instance `?v=2`. To the network that is a brand-new address it has never seen, so it fetches everything from scratch. Good for proving the tags are right, and for sharing today without waiting.

Test it in a chat with yourself first.
Paste the link in a message to yourself before it goes into the ad or the post. Ten seconds, and it saves you the wrong share that everybody has already seen.

A wrong preview is not an SEO problem.
Google does not use these tags to decide what it shows in its results: it uses the page title and description. They are separate things, and fixing one does not fix the other. For the Google side, see **being found on Google**.

NEED A HAND?

The image will not open and you cannot see why? Send us its address.

Open a support ticket →

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