Pause, notice, question, act: Stopping the spread of misinformation and disinformation

eSmart DIGITAL LICENCE

Join us on the quest!

40 min ×2

This lesson can take up to 80 minutes. It is recommended to break it down into two shorter 40 minute lessons.

Ages 10-12

The lesson has been designed for learners aged 10-12. The "checkpoints" offer differentiation strategies to scale learning as required.

This lesson has been co-created with Dr. Chloe Gordon, Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, Australian Catholic University, a former primary school teacher who specialises in research and teaching on media literacy, wellbeing, and digital flourishing.

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This lesson is part of the eSmart Digital Licence program

By completing just four engaging lessons, including this one, your class can earn their eSmart Digital Licences—signalling their understanding of safe and responsible online behaviour. Start now and guide your learners toward becoming confident and positive digital citizens.

Learn more about the program
be.esmart.org.au/digital-licence/overview

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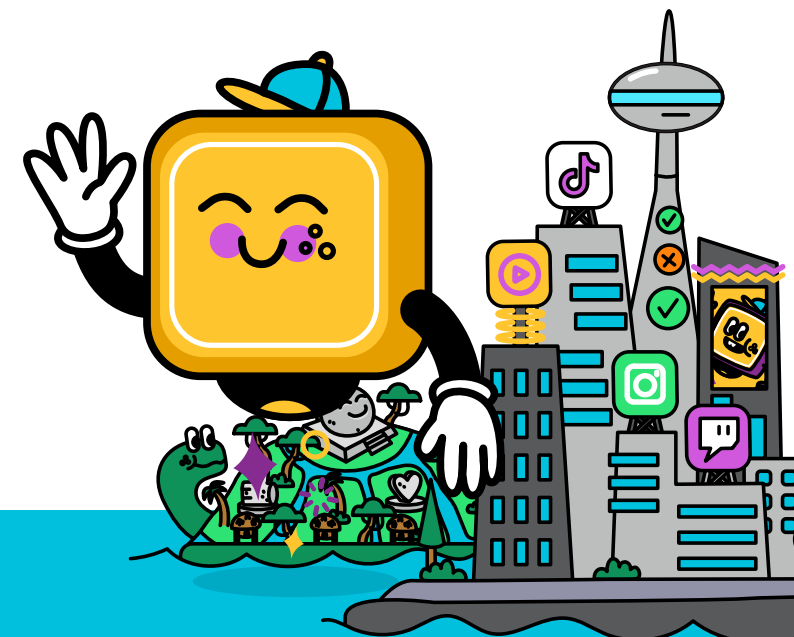
Overview

In this lesson, learners will learn how to identify and respond to misinformation shared with them by family, friends, ads, or other online sources. Learners will develop critical thinking skills to pause, recognise their emotional response, ask key questions to verify facts, and decide on appropriate actions, such as ignoring false information or informing a trusted adult.

This lesson aligns with and promotes several principles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the right to access reliable information (Article 17), by empowering learners to seek, evaluate, and use accurate information while understanding their responsibility in sharing it. The lesson also upholds the right to protection from harmful content (Article 19) by teaching learners how to safeguard themselves and others from the potential dangers of misinformation.

Setup

☐ A place to record learner responses, i.e. whiteboard/interactive whiteboard or a mind mapping tool.

☐ Project the lesson resources onto a central screen.

☐ (Optional) Provide a digital version of the slides for learners using assistive technology.

☐ (Optional) Pens, pencils, drawing tools, playdough or communication boards for those that require alternative means of expression.

Learning intentions & success criteria

Learners will:

- Develop knowledge of types of misinformation that they may be presented with by others, and how this may impact their rights.
- Develop skills and behaviours around responding to misinformation that has been shared by others.

These intentions are evidenced when learners can:

☐ Identify examples of different types of misinformation that might be shared with them online.

☐ Model ways to respond to misinformation that has been shared by others.

Educators will:

- Develop strategies to teach critical thinking skills, enabling learners to pause, evaluate, and question the reliability of online content.
- Deepen their understanding of how misinformation impacts learners' rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

These intentions are evidenced when educators can:

☐ Model fact-checking and critical questioning techniques in relation to online media.

☐ Clearly connect lesson content to learners' rights under the UNCRC, empowering learners to recognise the importance of accurate information and safe online behaviours.

Key messages

- Misinformation and disinformation can impact children's wellbeing and may affect their choices, relationships, and rights.
- Learners should feel empowered to make informed decisions about the media they encounter, and to exercise critical thinking and respectful discussion skills.

Misinformation is false or misleading information that is shared, regardless of intent to deceive. Unlike disinformation (deliberately false content), misinformation may be spread by people who believe it to be true. It is commonly shared online through social media, family and friends, advertisements, in peer groups, or through search engines and AI tools.

Types of misinformation and disinformation:

- Clickbait: Attention-grabbing headlines or images designed to make people click, often exaggerating or distorting the truth. Example: "Doctors hate this one trick to cure all illnesses!"
- Misleading Content: Information that misrepresents reality or facts, often by omitting context. Example: A cropped photo that hides important details to create a false impression.
- Fabricated Content: Entirely false information created to mislead. Example: Fake news articles about events that never happened.
- Imposter Content: Content pretending to be from a legitimate source, like a fake website mimicking a trusted news outlet. Example: A social media account pretending to be a government agency.
- False Connections: Headlines or visuals that don't match the content. Example: A headline suggesting a celebrity scandal when the article discusses a different topic.
- Manipulated Content: Genuine information or images altered to deceive. Example: Photos edited to add or remove elements.
- Satire or Parody: Content meant as humor but mistaken for factual information. Example: A satirical news article taken seriously.

What to do when misinformation or disinformation is shared?

Learners may feel pressure to agree with or not challenge misinformation shared by friends, family, or strangers online. The following strategies offer respectful and thoughtful ways to counter misinformation; however, personal safety should always be of primary concern. If it is better not to engage (for instance, if situations may be volatile, or if it would mean discussing topics with strangers) then learners should be encouraged to put their own safety first. Remind learners to talk to a parent/carer or trusted adult if they are unsure about information they see online.

Pause and Notice:

- Encourage learners to pause and notice their emotional reactions before sharing or believing content.
- Ask: "How does this make me feel? Does it seem too good (or bad) to be true?"

Question:

- Who created this content?
- When was this published? Is it still relevant?
- What is the source?
- Is this verified by other trusted sources?
- Does this align with what I already know?
- Introduce tools like Snopes, FactCheck.org, or Google reverse image search to verify claims.

Act:

- Block or report on the platform.
- Hold respectful conversations, i.e.: "I'm not sure that's true—can we check it together?" or "I read something different about this—let's find out more."

Lesson instructions

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Introduction to misinformation and disinformation

Slides 1-2: Sharing information online

Discuss where people share information online and the different types of information (e.g., articles, photos, videos). Look at examples on Slides 1-2, and ask learners whether they believe that the information presented is real or not.

Ask learners:
- How would they feel if these articles were shared with them?
- What would they do (e.g., share, question, or ignore)?
- What might make them want to share information with others?

**Slides 3-4: Strong emotion and false information**

Explain that all examples from Slides 1-2 are misinformation. Discuss:
- How do learners feel knowing the information is false?
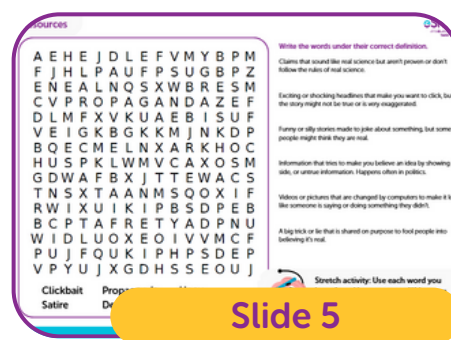- How would they feel if they had shared it by mistake?

Review the points on the slide about how strong emotions can make people share false information. Explore why some people might share misinformation, defend it strongly, or resist conversations about its accuracy. Ask learners if they've experienced this and why they think it happens.
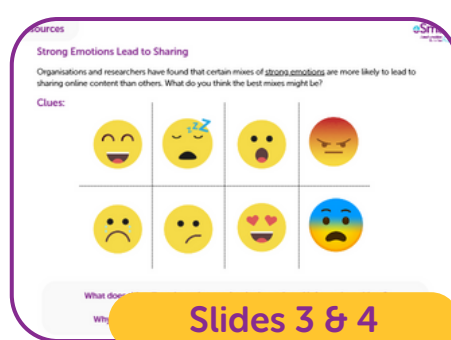
Slide 5: Types of Mis/Dis-information

In class, or, as homework

Complete the wordsearch to find terms related to misinformation and its types. Match each word to its definition. Optional Challenge: Use each word in a sentence.

Class discussion: Create a mind map on the board defining "misinformation" and "disinformation." Use the "Educator lesson notes" to guide and refine the definition.

Apply Learning:
- Revisit the examples from Slides 1-2.
- Identify which examples align with the different types of mis/disinformation discussed.

Checkpoint: Make it work for everyone

Differentiate the lesson by assessing the discussion. Modify instruction as appropriate, based on whether learners can:

- Contribute towards a definition of misinformation or disinformation.
- Identify at least one type of misinformation or disinformation in the examples provided.

Options:
- Visit a site such as ABC News Fact Check or Reuters Fact Check to find an example of misinformation that has been debunked. Discuss what type it could be.
- Use everyday examples to explain the difference: Misinformation: A friend tells you something untrue by mistake. Disinformation: Someone spreads a false story on purpose.

Slides 1 & 2

Slides 3 & 4

Slide 5

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Pause, notice, question, act

Slide 6: Child Rights and online information
Explain that child rights are part of basic human rights and aim to protect health, happiness, and safety. Use the UNICEF Australia Child Rights poster provided to guide the discussion.

As a class, or in think/pair/share groups: Revisit the concepts of misinformation and disinformation, focusing on how they relate to children's rights. What rights on the poster could be impacted by mis/dis-information?

Slide 7: Pause, Notice, Question, Act Framework
Reiterate the importance of identifying misinformation where possible, in line with the earlier discussion regarding child rights.

Use the slide to explain the Pause, Notice, Question, Act framework as a strategy for evaluating online information. Choose an example from Slides 1-2 or an online article to demonstrate how to apply the framework.

Ask learners how the framework can help protect children's rights by helping them make safer decisions online.
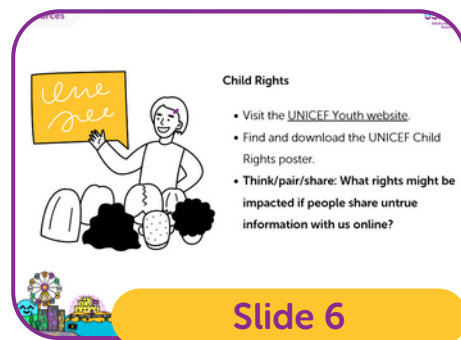
Slide 6
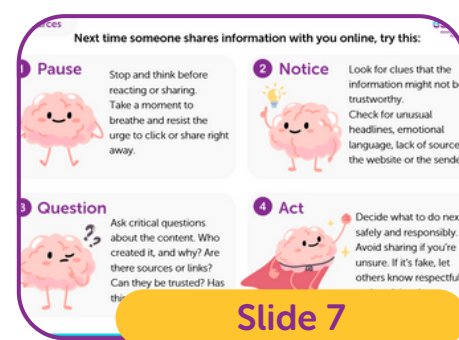
Slide 7

The Fact-Checking Project
Note: This may require the pre-approval and whitelisting of sites that are suitable for this age group to explore, such as:

- ABC's "Behind the News": An educational news program aimed at 10-13 year olds.
- Squiz Kids News Podcast: a daily podcast keeping kids informed, with none of the nasties.

Learners work in groups, pairs, or individually to find a piece of information - an article, image, podcast clip, or video - that they would like to fact check. Ask them to imagine that this media has been shared with them, and model how they would use the Pause, Notice, Question, Act framework to think through their responses. They will evaluate their chosen piece using this framework in the Exit Pass activity.

Checkpoint: Check understanding

Observe activity participation. Modify instruction if learners struggle to:

- Understand the links between false information and child rights.
- Identify a type of misinformation that they want to emulate.

Options:
- Play the video "What are Child Rights?" by UNICEF Australia to help unpack the concept of child rights.
- Assign each group one type of false information and ask them to brainstorm how it might affect a specific right.
- Have students act out situations where false information impacts child rights. Discuss the outcomes as a class.

Lesson instructions

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Exit pass

In-class activity <u>or</u> set as homework.

Using one of the fake news examples created during the lesson, have learners fill out the Exit Pass worksheet: It can be completed with a parent, carer, or trusted adult to discuss and develop their responses further.

Briefly review responses as a class. Invite peers to offer feedback, add ideas, or suggest improvements for the responses shared.

Checkpoint: Learning intentions & success criteria

Assess the "Exit pass" to ensure learners have met the following success criteria:

Identify examples of different types of misinformation that might be shared with them online.

Model ways to respond to misinformation that has been shared by others.

Next steps:

If some learners didn't meet the criteria, do the "Top-up" activity in the following section. Discussion about the lesson's themes can be continued at home, by setting the extension task as homework.

Important Note:

If this lesson is part of the eSmart Digital Licence, you'll need to ensure that all learners have met the success criteria before accessing the Digital Licences.
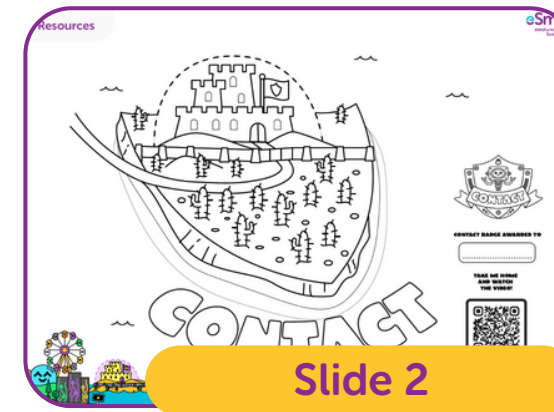

Slide 8

4

(Optional) Top-up or extend the lesson

Top-up the lesson

For learners who need more help meeting the learning intentions & success criteria.

Slide 2

Visit the eSafety Commissioner website, and guide learners in researching at least five tips for how to spot fake news.

Record these tips around the Contact area map, which they can later colour in.

Extend the lesson

For learners who have met the learning intentions & success criteria and need a bit more of a challenge.

Slide 2

Ask learners to identify a piece of possible misinformation in the news, and fact check it using online tools such as ABC News Fact Check or Reuters Fact Check. They can perform this task in class, or at home.

Record these findings around the Contact area map, which they can later colour in.
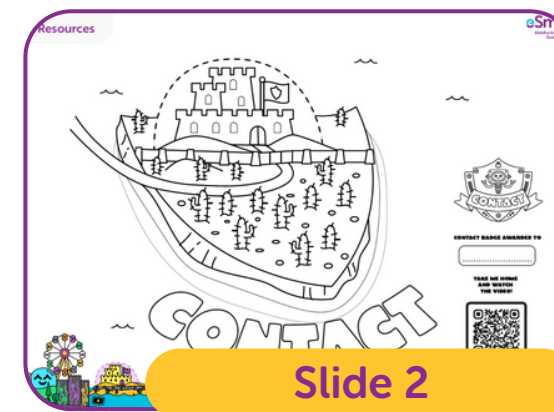
1 From The Daily News, 28 January 1943:

"Reports are flooding in from across the country of unusual electrical storms causing widespread disruption to radio broadcasts. Residents in small towns claim to have heard strange, unearthly noises interrupting regular programming, leading to speculation of enemy involvement or extraterrestrial activity."
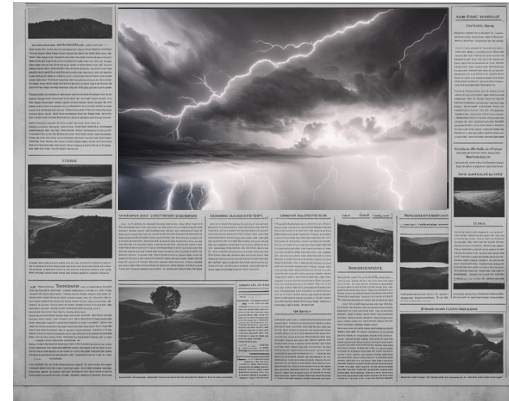
"Dr. Horace Whitaker, a noted meteorologist, stated, "The frequency and intensity of these storms are unlike anything we've observed before." However, some government officials remain tight-lipped, sparking rumors of top-secret war efforts interfering with the atmosphere."

Aw Cute!	Anger	Confused	Funny	Shock/awe

2

You Won't Believe the Size of These Tiny Pomeranians—Adopt One Before They're Gone!

Resources

Aw Cute!

Anger

Confused

Shock/awe

Funny

③

Dolphins Swimming Through City Streets? Shocking Sight in Louisiana Floods!

④

Outrage in Congress: Richard Smith Throws Epic Tantrum —Is This Who Should Be Leading Us?

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Resources

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Strong Emotions Lead to Sharing

Researchers have found that certain mixes of <u>strong emotions</u> are more likely to lead to sharing online content than others. What do you think the best mixes might be?

Clues:
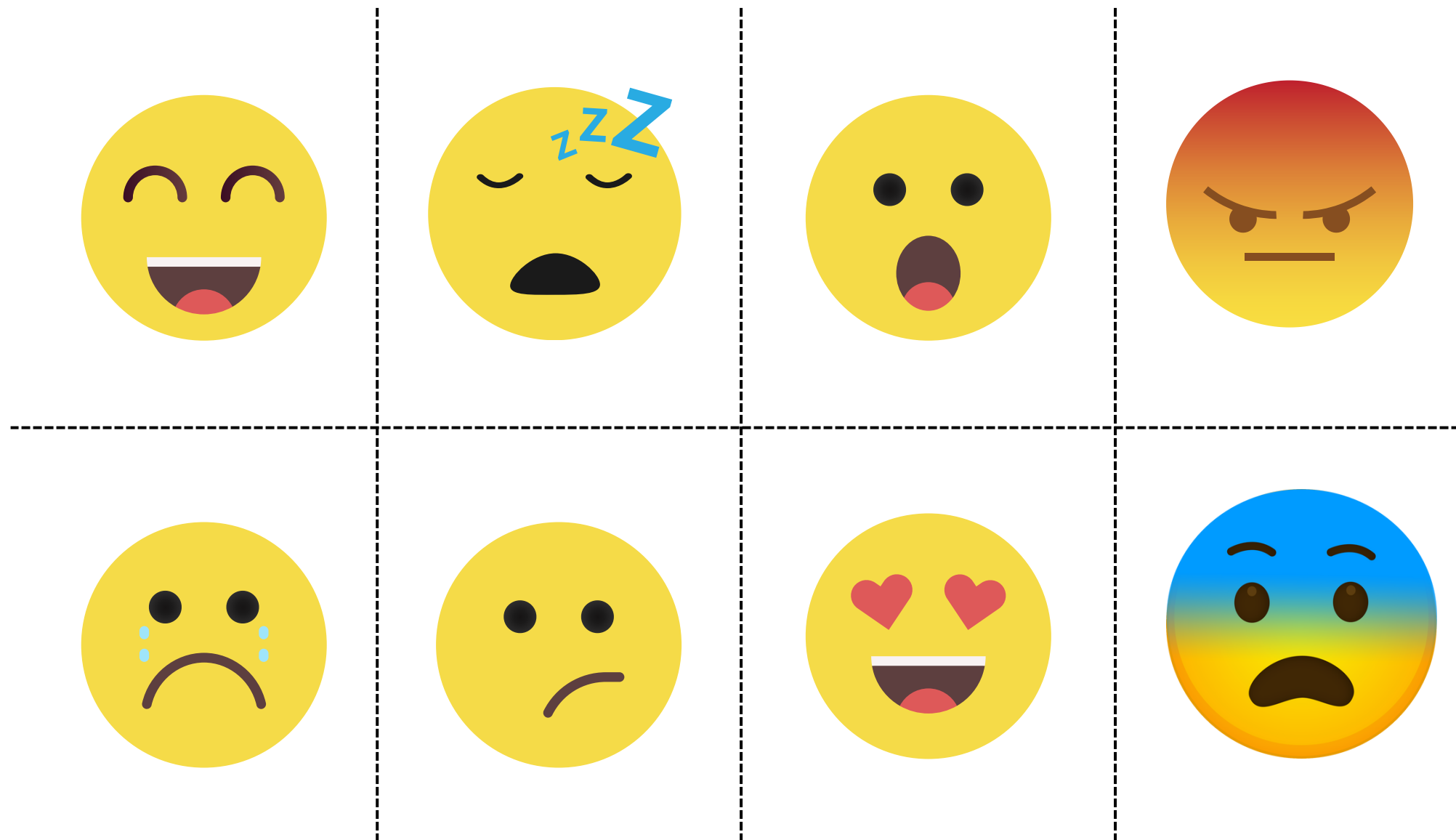
What does this tell us about the people who have shared information with us?
What might they be feeling?
Why might these feelings make it difficult to question information online?

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Why do writers and platforms want false or misleading information to be shared?

It seems like a lot of effort to create false and misleading information, and then try to encourage others to share it online. Why do people and platforms do it?

Clues:
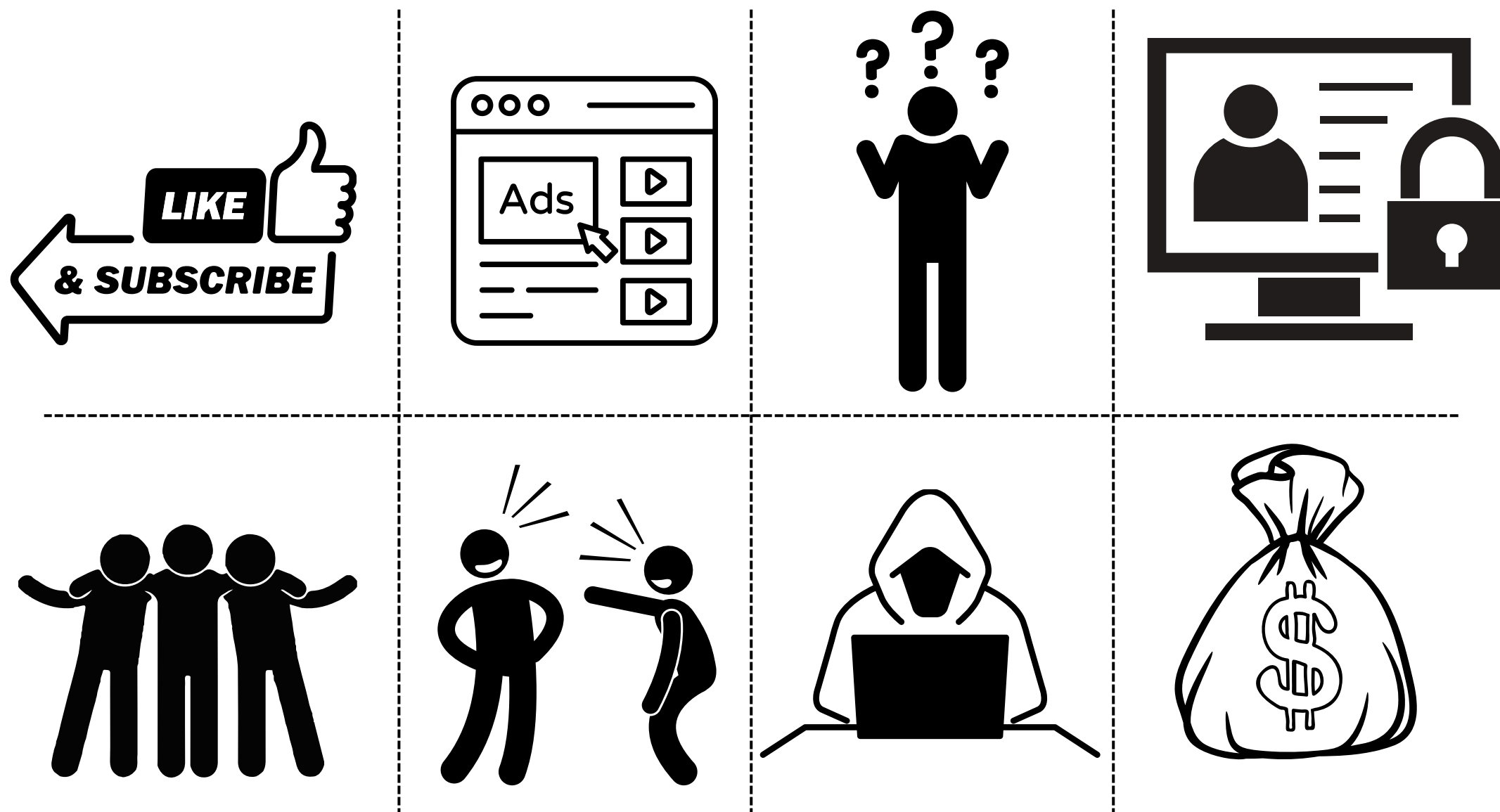
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A E H E J D L E F V M Y B P M
F J H L P A U F P S U G B P Z
E N E A L N Q S X W B R E S M
C V P R O P A G A N D A Z E F
D L M F X V K U A E B I S U F
V E I G K B G K K M J N K D P
B Q E C M E L N X A R K H O C
H U S P K L W M V C A X O S M
G D W A F B X J T T E W A C S
T N S X T A A N M S Q O X I F
R W I X U I K I P B S D P E B
B C P T A F R E T Y A D P N U
W I D L U O X E O I V V M C F
P U J F Q U K I P H P S D E P
V P Y U J X G D H S S E O U J
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Clickbait   **Propaganda**   **Hoax**
Satire   **Deepfake**   **Pseudoscience**

Write the words under their correct definition.

Claims that sound like real science but aren't proven or don't follow the rules of real science.

Exciting or shocking headlines that make you want to click, but the story might not be true or is very exaggerated.

Funny or silly stories made to joke about something, but some people might think they are real.

Information that tries to make you believe an idea by showing one side, or untrue information. Happens often in politics.

Videos or pictures that are changed by computers to make it look like someone is saying or doing something they didn't.

A big trick or lie that is shared on purpose to fool people into believing it's real.

Stretch activity: Use each word you have found in a sentence. Write your sentences and explain them to a helper or friend.
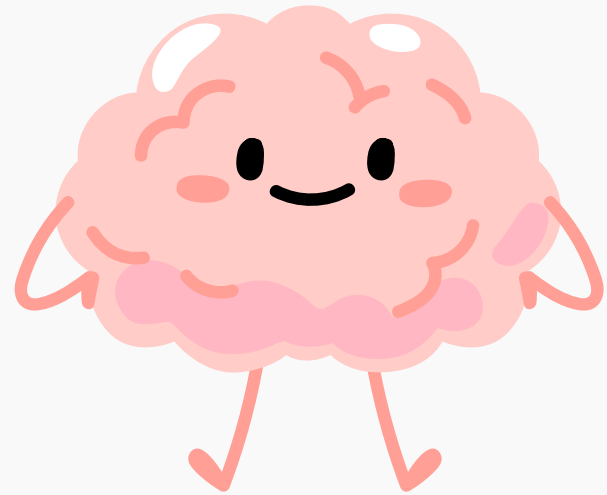
Child Rights

- Visit the <u>UNICEF Australia Youth website</u>.

- Find and download the UNICEF Australia Child Rights poster.

- **Think/pair/share: What rights might be impacted if people share untrue information with us online?**
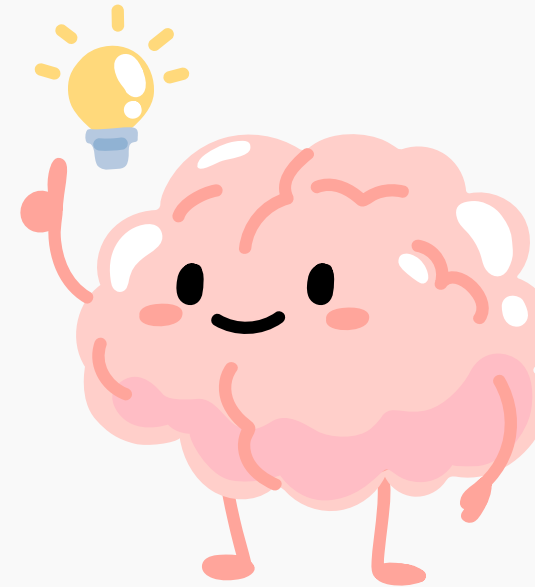
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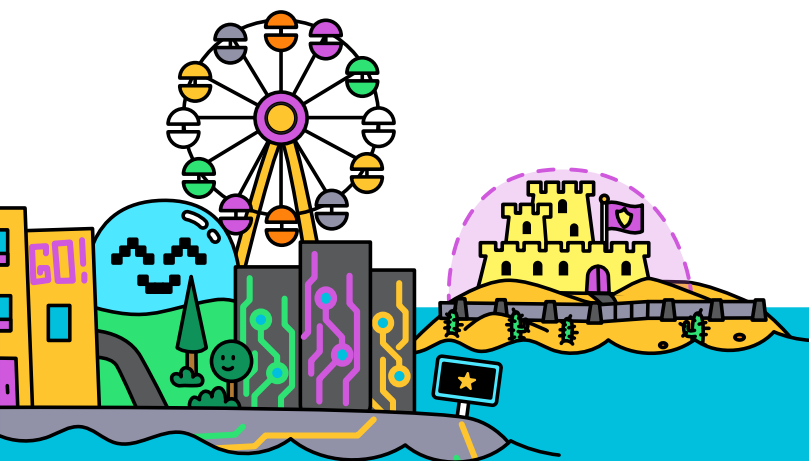
1 Pause

Stop and think before reacting or sharing. Take a moment to breathe and resist the urge to click or share right away.

2 Notice

Look for clues that the information might not be trustworthy. Check for unusual headlines, emotional language, lack of sources, the website or the sender.

3 Question
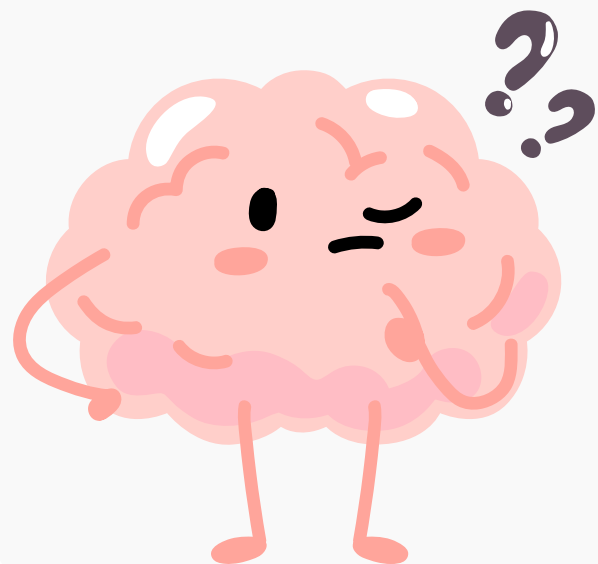
Ask critical questions about the content. Who created it, and why? Are there sources or links? Can they be trusted? Has this been fact-checked?
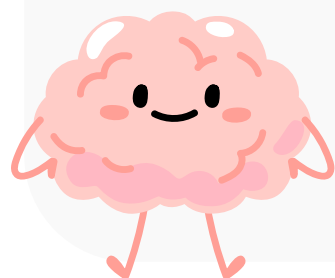
4 Act

Decide what to do next, safely and responsibly. Avoid sharing if you're unsure. If it's fake, let others know respectfully and explain why.

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1 Pause

What has made you pause?

_____

_____

_____

2 Notice

What have you noticed?

_____

_____

_____
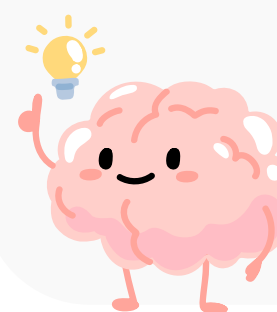
3 Question

What did you question and find out?

_____

_____

_____
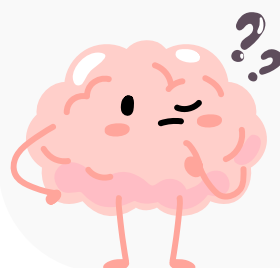
4 Act

What safe and respectful actions could you take?

_____

_____

_____

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CONTACT

CONTACT BADGE AWARDED TO

....

TAKE ME HOME
AND WATCH
THE VIDEO!

be.esmart.org.au/dl/contact-video

CONTACT

GO!

Aligned curriculum

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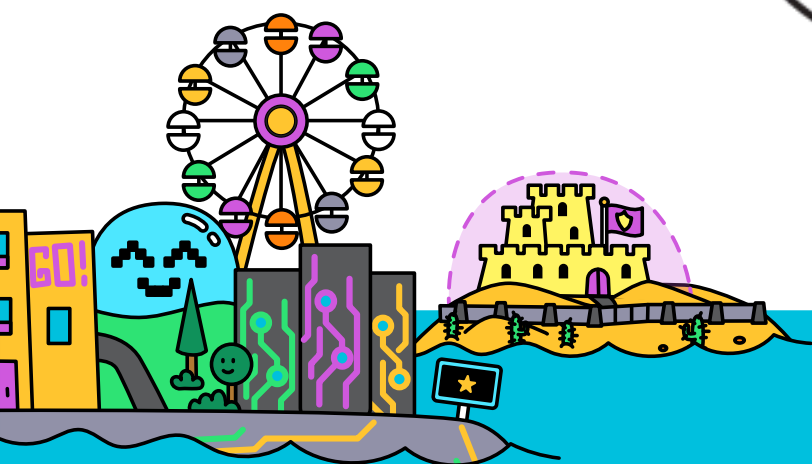
Australian Curriculum (Version 9.0): Years 5 & 6

Year 5: English

AC9E5LA01: Understand that language is selected for social contexts and that it helps to signal social roles and relationships.

AC9E5LA02: Understand how to move beyond making bare assertions by taking account of differing ideas or opinions and authoritative sources.

AC9E5LA07: Explain how the sequence of images in print, digital and film texts has an effect on meaning.

AC9E5LY02: Use appropriate interaction skills including paraphrasing and questioning to clarify meaning, make connections to own experience, and present and justify an opinion or idea.

AC9E5LY03: Explain characteristic features used in imaginative, informative and persuasive texts to meet the purpose of the text.

AC9E5LY05: Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning to evaluate information and ideas.

Year 6: English

AC9E6LA02: Understand the uses of objective and subjective language, and identify bias.

AC9E6LA07: Identify and explain how images, figures, tables, diagrams, maps and graphs contribute to meaning.

AC9E6LY01: Examine texts including media texts that represent ideas and events, and identify how they reflect the context in which they were created.

AC9E6LY02: Use interaction skills and awareness of formality when paraphrasing, questioning, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, and sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions.

AC9E6LY03: Analyse how text structures and language features work together to meet the purpose of a text, and engage and influence audiences.

AC9E6LY05: Use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising, monitoring and questioning to build literal and inferred meaning, and to connect and compare content from a variety of sources.

Years 5 & 6: Health and Physical Education

AC9HP6P04: Describe and demonstrate how respect and empathy can be expressed to positively influence. relationships

AC9HP6P08: Analyse and rehearse protective behaviours and help-seeking strategies that can be used in a range of online and offline situations.

AC9HP6P10: Analyse how behaviours influence the health, safety, relationships and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Years 5 & 6: Media Arts

AC9AMA6E01: Explore ways that media languages and media technologies are used in media arts works and practices across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts.

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My Time, Our Place ⤢

Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world.
Children learn about the impact of sharing information and how to engage positively with their community.
This is evident when children:
- Identify how their actions in sharing or addressing misinformation affect others in online spaces.

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners.
Children engage in critical thinking and problem-solving to assess the reliability of information.
This is evident when children:
- Use fact-checking tools to verify information and confidently articulate their findings.

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators.
Children share their understanding of misinformation and strategies for addressing it through collaborative activities.
This is evident when children:
- Communicate their findings about misinformation to peers and trusted adults, fostering shared learning.

CASEL Framework ⤢

Responsible Decision-Making
The lesson encourages critical thinking and informed decision-making in digital interactions. This is evident when learners:
- Use the "Pause, Notice, Question, Act" framework to analyse the credibility of online information and decide how to respond.
- Evaluate the consequences of sharing misinformation, both for themselves and for their communities.

Bournemouth University Theory of Change ⤢

Consequences
Media literacy can contribute to significant change if we take media literacy actions that can make a constructive and positive impact on the media ecosystem in our lives and on the lives of others in a functioning civic society. Consequences may include challenging misinformation, producing media content and / or online information, sharing trustworthy content on social media, trying to increase the representation of people who are marginalised in the media, data activism or more critical and mindful non-action (e.g. not sharing misinformation, changing data settings).

National Association of Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) ⤢

Core Principle 1
- 1.1: MLE encourages learners to ask critical questions about the media they engage with.
- 1.2: MLE intersects with other literacies, such as critical thinking, social literacy, and emotional literacy.

Core Principle 2
- 2.1: MLE includes digital, visual, and social media as valid forms of literacy.
- 2.3: MLE integrates emotional and physiological responses to media.

Core Principle 3
- 3.1: MLE equips learners with transferable skills for evaluating media and making informed decisions.

Core Principle 6
- 6.1: MLE promotes responsible and ethical behaviour in digital interactions.
- 6.3: MLE encourages collaborative problem-solving and dialogue.