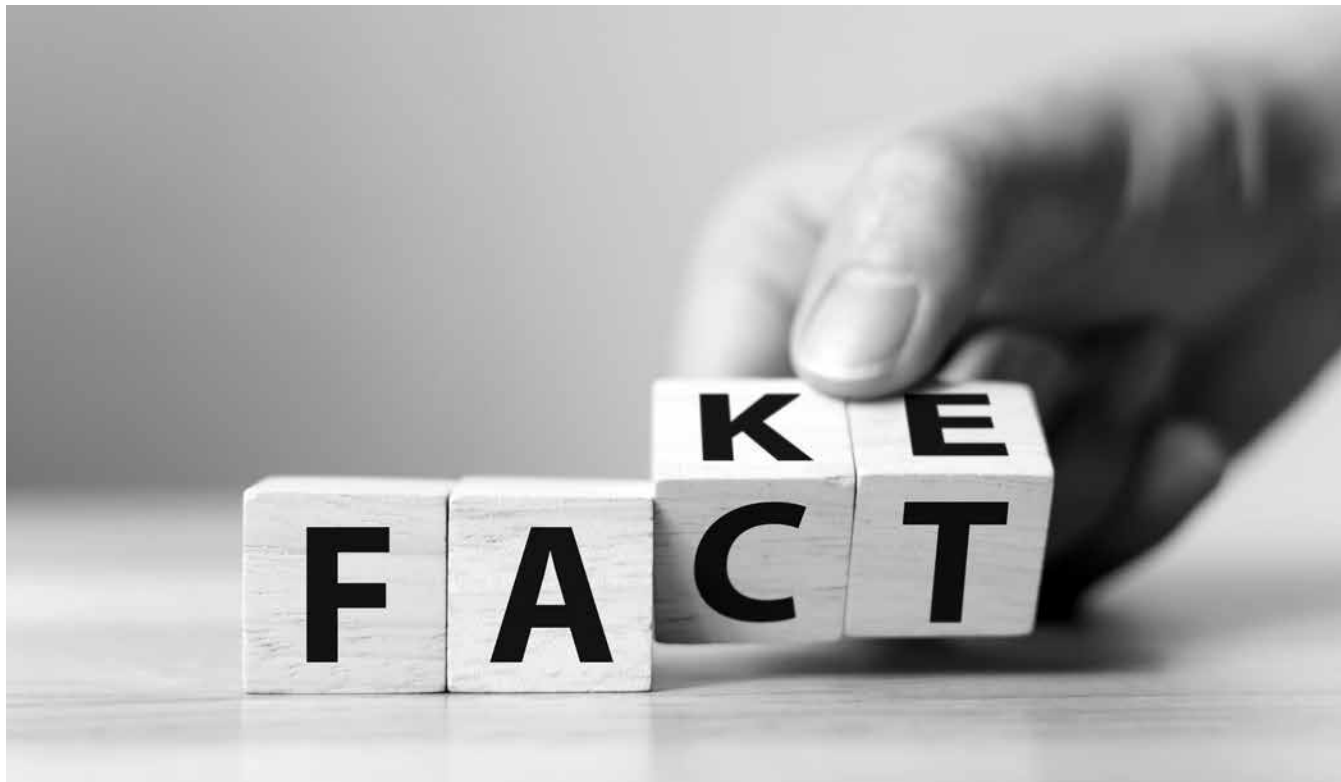


Lesson 6

Online Verification Habits



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the consequences of information pollution?
- 2 How can I verify information online?

PURPOSE

Being able to determine what is fact or fiction online has become an essential skill of citizenship in the digital age. We need to think critically about what we see, learn the tools to fact-check information, develop the habits to verify stories and claims, and establish a list of trusted sources.

In this lesson, students participate in an online interactive game, *FakeOut*, which gives them a chance to assess their ability to detect false information before and after learning the tricks of verification. In the *Consolidation* activity, students will review what they learned and practice applying the skills.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- explain why it is important to verify information online before they believe or share it;
- describe the skills they can use to check a source, claim or image;
- apply the verification skills to the information they see online.

Starter

1. Using Slide Deck 6, show students the three photos, and ask if they think each is real or manipulated. Have students commit to answers by writing them down.
2. Ask students to 'Turn and Talk' with a classmate and discuss the following questions.
 - How do you know what you see online is true?
 - Have you ever been fooled by false information?
 - What criteria do you use to assess if something is true or trustworthy?
3. Reveal the answers to the three images from Step 1 (Slide Deck 6).

Activities

1. Introduce the concepts of information pollution, misinformation and disinformation, using the 'Information Pollution' and 'Disinformation' videos and/or Slide Deck 6.
2. Have students play *FakeOut*, the online interactive game available at newsliteracy.ca. By registering and creating a class account, you can monitor each student's ability to detect false information before and after learning the tricks of verification. This game can be played on mobile devices and computers.
 - a) **Set-up:** Explain to students that they will get to test their ability to detect false information through an online game. Distribute the link to students and have them enter a personal identifier for tracking purposes.
 - b) **Play Round 1:** In the first round, students face 10 posts from various sources. Using only their instincts, students are asked to assess whether each is true or false. Tell students they should not worry about their score and they should just guess quickly based on their gut reaction.

When the round is complete, students are presented with their score out of 10.
 - c) **Watch the tutorials:** Using the video tutorials, review the following tricks you can use to verify information. It is suggested that you watch these videos as a class. However, students can also watch them independently in the Skills section of game.
 - 'Check the Source' – Who produced the information? Search Wikipedia or Google to learn about the reputation of the source.

- 'Check the Claim' – What do other sources say? Search keywords or the headline to learn more about a claim and what has been reported by other trusted sources.
 - 'Check the Image' – Has the photo been altered or used out of context? A reverse image search can help you learn more about an image by finding out where else it has been used.
- d) **Review how the skills work in the game:** Explain to students that these skills are incorporated into Round 2 of the game. For each post, options are available to 'check a source,' 'check a claim,' or 'check an image' using the pink plus signs. Have students practice using the checks in the example in the online interactive game prior to playing Round 2.
 - e) **Play Round 2:** Students will review another 10 posts. This time, three pink plus signs representing the checks appear on each post. Clicking a plus sign will reveal the information found by using each check. Not every check will work every time, but players can employ as many checks as they like.
 - f) **Review the results:** After submitting an answer for all the posts, a results screen shows the score for Round 2, as well as how it compares to Round 1. Teachers will have access to this data through the admin panel and the class account.

Consolidation

Remind students that these fact-checking skills can be used very quickly when reviewing information.

Using Activity 6.1, have students consolidate their learning by writing down what they learned from the activities and have them practice the skills on their own time.

- Part 1: **REVIEW** – What did you learn from this lesson? Write down helpful notes for each check.
- Part 2: **PRACTICE** – Select two social media posts you come across and practice investigating them. Write down what you find out.

Extended Learning

1. Introduce additional skills that can be used to verify sources by watching the 'Online Verification Skills with Mike Caulfield' video series.
 - '[Video 1: Introductory Video](#)' (3:14) – This video uses an experiment to highlight the importance of developing verification skills.
 - '[Video 2: Investigate the Source](#)' (2:43) – What is the publication or organization behind the story or claim? Find out information about who produced what you are reading with an online search (i.e., Google) or by using Wikipedia.
 - '[Video 3: Find the Original Source](#)' (1:33) – With so much re-reporting online, it is important to find the original reporting source and determine its credibility.
 - '[Video 4: Look for Trusted Work](#)' (4:10) – Look at fact-checking sites like Snopes and HoaxEye on Twitter, or established news sources to confirm stories or claims.
2. Have students practice these skills with the examples provided in Activity 6.2.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Citizens face an information ecosystem where it is increasingly challenging to separate fact from fiction and to recognize what is credible.

Posts on social media are designed to look similar to one another, so it can be difficult to figure out where information is coming from, and if it is reliable. People often share posts without paying attention to the source or evaluating trustworthiness. Therefore, it is very easy for wrong information to spread, especially when no one is policing the facts.

All kinds of false and misleading information are labelled “fake news” — articles intended to deceive people, manipulated images, clickbait

headlines, conspiracy theories and hoaxes. Some people call accurate news “fake” just because they don't like it. “Fake news” has been a widely used shortcut, but because it is politically charged and describes so many different things, it is best to use more precise language.

Misinformation is false information, but the person sharing it believes it to be true. While misinformation can be damaging, its intent is not to cause harm. Examples could include a factual error caused by misunderstanding, a manipulated image, or a real photo that appears with a made-up story.

Disinformation is false information that is deliberately created and shared to cause harm. It has the goal of confusing people about what is true and influencing how they think and act. For example,

a false rumour circulated about a political candidate that causes others to doubt their trustworthiness is disinformation.

Together, all this misinformation and disinformation can be thought of as “information pollution.”

Unreliable stories or posts can be interesting or funny or spark an emotion that makes us want to believe and share them with friends. People contribute to the problem by sharing false and misleading content.

Information pollution can pose a serious threat to democracy when people base their views and decisions on faulty information. This is a particular concern at election time. There is also a risk that if people do not know what to believe they will become cynical and begin to distrust all sources.