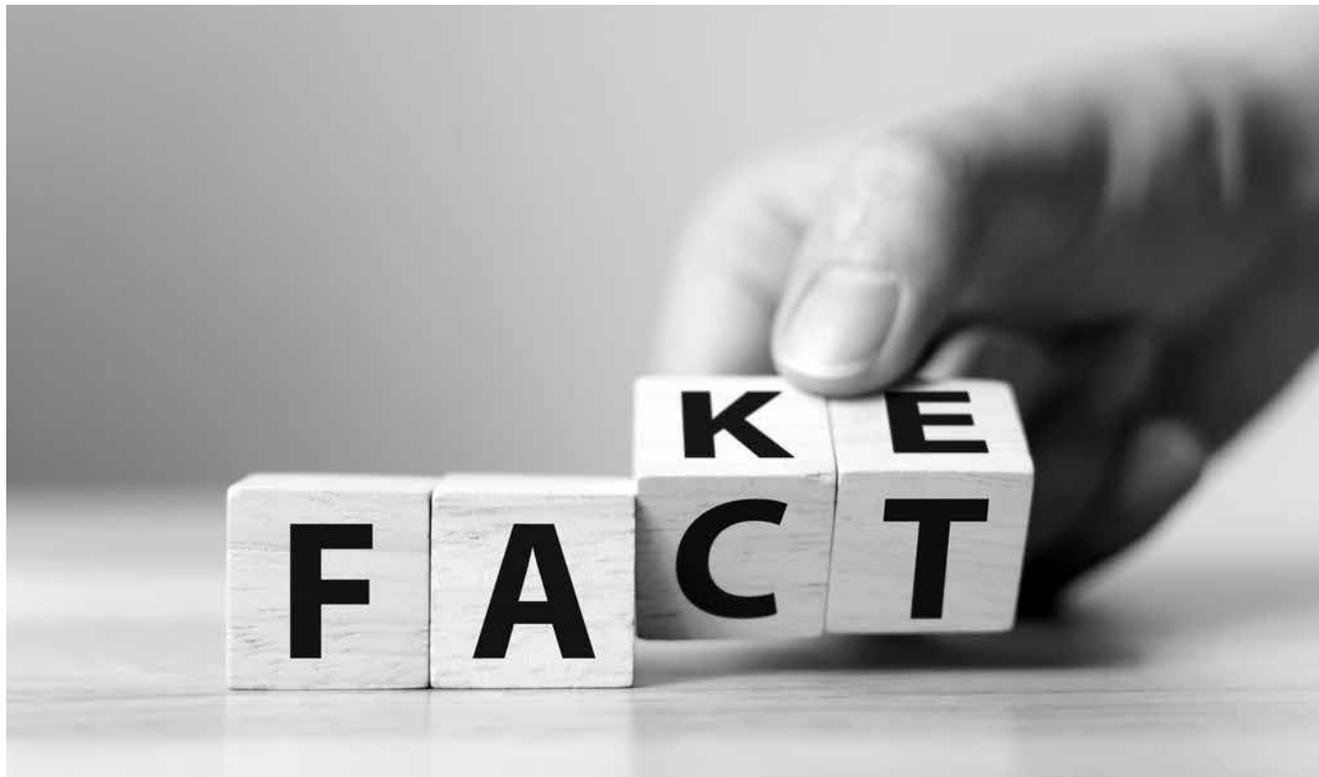


# Lesson 6

## Online Verification Habits



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

❶ **Why should I verify information I see online?**

❷ **How can I tell fact from fiction on the internet?**

### PURPOSE

Being able to tell what is fact and what is 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 trusted list of 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 check information before they believe or share it;
- describe the skills they can use to check a source, claim or image;
- apply the fact-checking skills to the information they see online.

## Tips For Teachers

- Please use the activities and combine them in a way that is appropriate for your class.
- By registering and creating a class account for *FakeOut* at [www.newsliteracy.ca](http://www.newsliteracy.ca), you can monitor each student's ability to detect false or misleading information before and after learning the tricks of verification.
- Supplies/Needs: computers and access to the internet (*FakeOut*), 'Information Pollution' video, 'Disinformation' video, Slide Deck 6, copies of 6.1, copies of 6.2 (if desired).
- Any videos, slide decks, handouts and activity sheets in Word can be found at: [studentvote.ca/canada](http://studentvote.ca/canada).

## Starter

1. Play a game of 'broken telephone' with your class.
  - a) Divide students into two or three groups and have them line up behind one another or arrange them in a circle.
  - b) Whisper the following phrase to the first person and ask them to pass it on to the next person.

*A dog named Goose ran loose through the spruce forest chasing a moose.*

There should be no repeating. If the next player did not hear what was said, that's okay, it is part of the fun of the game! The next player then whispers what they think they heard to the following player, and so on. This continues until the word or phrase reaches the very last person.
  - c) Have the last person share what they heard out loud.
2. Debrief on the activity. Questions:
  - What did you learn through the activity?
  - How easy is it for a message to change when it is passed from one person to another?
  - Did anyone deliberately try to change the message? If so, why?

## Activities

1. Using Slide Deck 6, show students the three photos, and ask if they think each is real or fake. Have students commit to answers by writing them down.
2. Have a whole-class discussion: How do you know what you see online is true? Have you ever been fooled?
3. Reveal the answers to the three images from Part 1 in Slide Deck 6.

4. Introduce the concepts of information pollution, misinformation and disinformation, using the 'Information Pollution' and 'Disinformation' videos and/or Slide Deck 6.
5. Have students play *FakeOut*, the online interactive game available at [www.newsliteracy.ca](http://www.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 or 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 review 10 posts from various sources. Using only their instincts, students are asked to assess whether each is true or false. Tell students they will not be marked for 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 short videos as a class. However, students can also watch them independently in the *Skills* section of the game.
    - 'Check the Source' (1:48) – Who produced the information? Search Wikipedia or Google to learn about the reputation of the source.
    - 'Check the Claim' (1:39) – 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' (1:30) – Has the image been altered or used out of context? A reverse image search can help you find out if the image has been manipulated, or used for a different purpose.
  - 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 the plus sign will reveal the information found by using each check. Not every check will work every time, but players can use as many checks as they like. At least one check should be clicked on before deciding if a post is true or false.
- 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 online stories or videos on YouTube and see what you can find out.

## Extended Learning

1. Introduce additional skills that can be used to verify sources, stories and claims 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 who is the 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. An answer key can be found at [studentvote.ca/verification](http://studentvote.ca/verification).

### 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.

To understand the problem of false and misleading information, it helps to define and categorize the main types.

**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 not trust any source.