



HOW IS **INFORMATION** CONSTRUCTED?



4

FACT SHEET

HOW CAN YOU RECOGNIZE A RELIABLE RESOURCE ON THE INTERNET?

OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRICULUM

DISCIPLINE AND LEVEL CONCERNED

English Elementary Cycle 3

Read a variety of texts

- Use literary and common texts to develop critical and creative thinking.

TARGETED DIMENSIONS OF THE DIGITAL COMPETENCY

- Collaborate using digital tools;
- Develop and mobilize your information literacy;
- Communicate with digital tools.
- Develop your critical thinking regarding digital tools.

SUGGESTED DIGITAL TOOLS

- YouTube;
- Mentimeter to Wooclap.

EDUCATIONAL INTENTION OF THE GUIDE

By the end of these activities, the students will be able to recognize a reliable resource on the Internet by using the tools necessary to distinguish true from false.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITIES

- Identify the factors that characterize reliable and credible websites or media;
- Identify the factors that characterize websites or media that must be treated with suspicion;
- Compare similar publications and be able to distinguish the factors that are meant to be misleading.

BEFORE STARTING: QUESTIONNAIRE

- Ask the students to describe how they assess the reliability of a website, a YouTuber, a TikTok account, etc.;
- Ask the student if they would be able to quickly recognize a site that presents false information.

BEWARE OF APPEARANCES

Everything is mixed together on the Internet. Even suspicious sites may look credible. And now that we get information everywhere on the Web, including social media (Facebook, Twitter, SnapChat, Instagram, TikTok) and from YouTubers or influencers, it can be difficult to distinguish a reliable account from those created to mislead us.

On these platforms, true and false information is often presented in the same way or similarly, without distinction. It's up to each of us to know how to differentiate them and develop the necessary reflexes to identify the reliable resources... and those to ignore.

WHAT IS THE REPUTATION OF THE WEBSITE, THE YOUTUBER OR THE INFLUENCER?

Of course, a website, a YouTuber or an influencer won't tell you they present false or misleading information. Here are two ways to check their reputation.

Search for their name or title in a search engine

Google, Bing and Wikipedia are very good starting points. By looking for the name of a website that interests us or a YouTuber that intrigues us, we can quickly stumble on articles and information that will tell us a little more about their reputation.

For example, Wikipedia can sometimes tell us who is behind a website and who finances it. If a YouTuber is very controversial, this information can be obtained quickly with a simple search.

Check whether serious media have already done this

Several journalists and media have the mandate to identify suspicious websites and debunk false information circulating on the Web. There are even directories of shady websites. If a website shares fake news repeatedly, it's

better to suspect it.

However, this tip isn't infallible. Some creators of fake news haven't existed long enough to be identified by journalists. Or sometimes they simply sneak under their radar.

The Décodex, created by the French newspaper Le Monde, is a search engine that allows you to verify sources quickly.

Here are some English-language fact-checking websites:

- Snopes
- Politifact
- FactCheck.org
- NPR
- Washington Post Fact Checker
- BuzzFeed News
- Hoaxbuster
- The Rumour Detector (Agence Science-Presses);

WHAT INDICATES WHO IS BEHIND THE SITE?

To trust a website or even a profile on social media, it's important to know who is responsible for it. Here's how to verify it:

Look at the "About us" and "Contact us" sections

A serious website clearly posts its mission and contact information. You can easily find out the team behind the website and contact someone as needed. Usually, these sections are found at the very top or the very bottom of a Web page.

In general, parody websites indicate that their publications should not be taken seriously. However, this isn't always the case. Some dishonest authors only want to deceive us!

Check if the publications are signed

If the articles on a website aren't signed or are written under pseudonyms, this is a bad sign and you must be careful.

ARE BOTH SIDES PRESENTED?

The teacher is invited to draw a parallel between this fact sheet and the one entitled "Information vs. opinion".

The reliable media have the mandate to present neutral information and balance the points of view reported. For example, if a journalist reports on a new law that divides two communities, write a balanced article, the opinions of both sides must be reported.

However, many websites present only their own point of view. This is often the case for websites of political parties or activists, and of many YouTubers who play on people's emotions or anger. Everyone has the right to express their opinion. However, every bias must be clearly indicated and not presented as neutral information.

TRAPS TO AVOID

Many misleading websites like to "disguise" themselves as reliable sites. They will have a professional, meticulous look that recalls the appearance of major media websites. Apart from the tips provided up to now in this fact sheet, some details may tell us whether we are dealing with a quality resource or manipulated or false information.

Copcats and names that look credible

Websites that pose as news media use several tactics to mislead the reader. The most popular is to model themselves on serious websites that inspire trust and use Web addresses (URL) almost identical to the official addresses. For example: www.radio-canada.ca and www.rado-canada.ca.

Spelling mistakes

Information professionals never (or very rarely) let mistakes slip in when they publish an article. If the headlines, subheads and texts are full of syntax and spelling errors, be suspicious.

Blaring headlines and exaggerated punctuation

The first thing that catches the eye of a reader or a Web user is the headline of an article or a video. Even serious professional media use catchy or sensational headlines to attract attention. But even if some headlines are eye-catching, they must still be true.

Creators of fake news (articles or videos) don't care about the truth or the public interest. They use exaggerated terms and false information to attract Web visitors. Often, these headlines will be in ALL CAPS and accompanied by exclamation marks or questions marks to stand out.

Examples

- TIGER ATTACKS A TOURIST IN PARIS!!!
- The TRUTH about the Prime Minister
- You won't believe your eyes! Click on this video to find out!

IF IN DOUBT, LOOK ELSEWHERE

Do you have doubts about the content of a site? Look elsewhere! Except for exclusives, news is relayed between media. If no traditional media mentions information that is apparently important, you must question the source's credibility.

EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1

The teacher is invited to select three local media or media well known to the students and ask them to identify the following information by searching their websites:

- The postal code;
- The owner (if there is one);
- The Editor-in-Chief.

EXERCISE 2

On YouTube, many users publish videos on local and world events. The major news networks also publish their reports there.

- First, students are invited to find two videos that deal with the same subject: one taken from a traditional media network (CBC, CTV, CNN, New York Times, etc.); and another presented by an amateur, a YouTuber or an influencer

The teacher may choose the videos in advance to avoid showing the students alarmist or violent remarks.

- Ask the students how the authors are presented in the “About us” section of their Web page. What does this indicate about how they will treat the subjects addressed?
- After watching, ask the students about the differences in how the videos treated the subject and which video was more credible. Why?