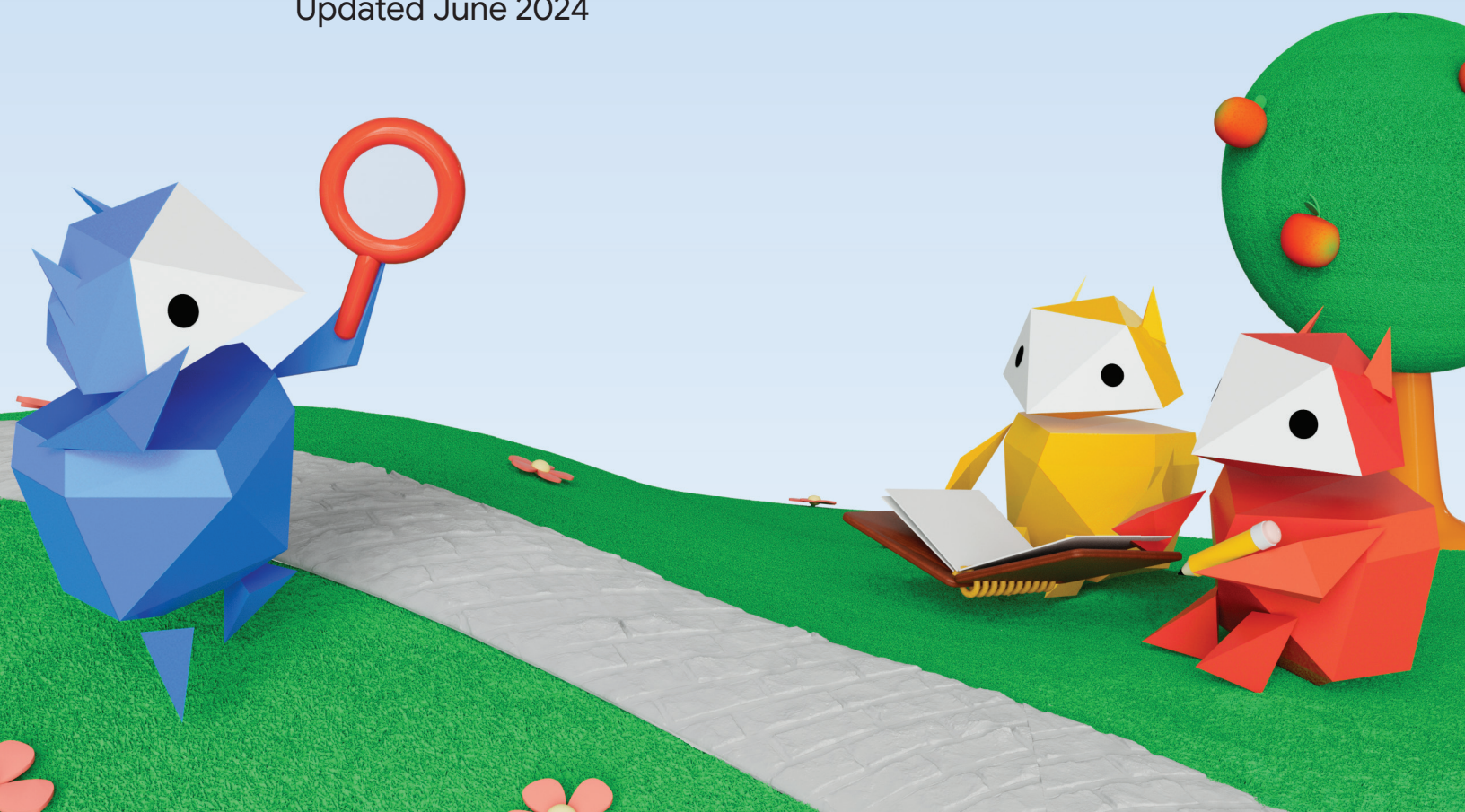


Be Internet Awesome.

Media Literacy Lessons

Updated June 2024





Media literacy has never been more important.

From social media to virtual reality to generative AI, our media landscape is constantly changing and getting more complex. It demands a lot from us.

But it's still *media*. The good news is, the skills to navigate this landscape apply to all media, whether it's on or off a screen, digital or not, text, sound or images.

So where do we start? This is a great place. This collection of six lessons covers the basic concepts and practices of media literacy—a foundation to help your students grow their skills as media makers, sharers and consumers. Students will also learn what media makers always need to think about: the impact of their messages. They'll learn about...

Perspective and how we're all media makers now, each of us with our own views and ways of interpreting what we see in media

Framing and how media makers make choices about what to leave in and leave out of what they create or share

Credibility, both what it means and how to find information you can count on

Deception and manipulation in media so they can spot disinformation online

Sourcing and representation and why it's important to make it a practice to ask, "Who made this and why?"

So welcome to our little handbook that aims to offer something really big: how to navigate our media environment safely with confidence and competency.

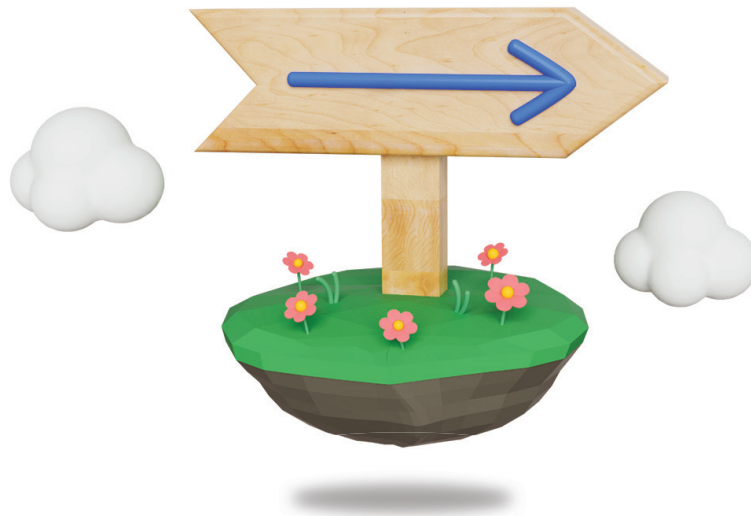
We would like to thank Faith Rogow, author of Media Literacy for Young Children, NAMLE, and The Net Safety Collaborative for helping us bring these lessons to life.



Table of Contents

Media Literacy Lessons

Unit 1	<u>Share with Care</u>	02
Lesson 1	That's not what I meant!	
Lesson 2	Frame it	
Unit 2	<u>Don't Fall for Fake</u>	14
Lesson 3	Is that really true?	
Lesson 4	Spotting untrustworthy information online	
Unit 3	<u>It's Cool to Be Kind</u>	35
Lesson 5	How words can change the whole picture	
Unit 4	<u>When in Doubt, Talk It Out</u>	44
Lesson 6	What does it mean to be brave?	



Unit 1:

Share with Care



Protecting yourself, your information and your privacy online

Media literacy lesson overview

Lesson 1 That's not what I meant!

Grades 2-6

Lesson 2 Frame it

Grades 2-6

Themes

Teachers and parents understand how digital mistakes can hurt feelings, reputations, and privacy. But it can be harder to convince kids that a seemingly harmless post today could be misunderstood tomorrow—let alone in the future and by people they never thought would see it.

These activities use concrete examples and thought-provoking discussions to teach young learners how to maintain a positive online presence and protect their privacy.

Goals for students

- ✓ **Create and manage** a positive reputation both online and offline.
- ✓ **Respect** the privacy boundaries of others, even if different from one's own.
- ✓ **Understand** the potential impact of a mismanaged digital footprint.
- ✓ **Ask** for adult help when dealing with sticky situations.

Standards addressed

ISTE Standards for Educators

ISTE Standards for Students

AASL Learning Standards

Share with Care:

Vocabulary

Code

A word or phrase, an image (like a logo or emoji), or some other symbol or collection of symbols that represent a certain meaning or message. Sometimes it's a secret code that only certain people understand; often it's just a symbol that stands for something almost everybody understands.

Context

Information that surrounds the message (or whatever we're seeing) which helps us understand it. Context can include the place where the message is, the time when it appears, or who it's coming from.

Interpret

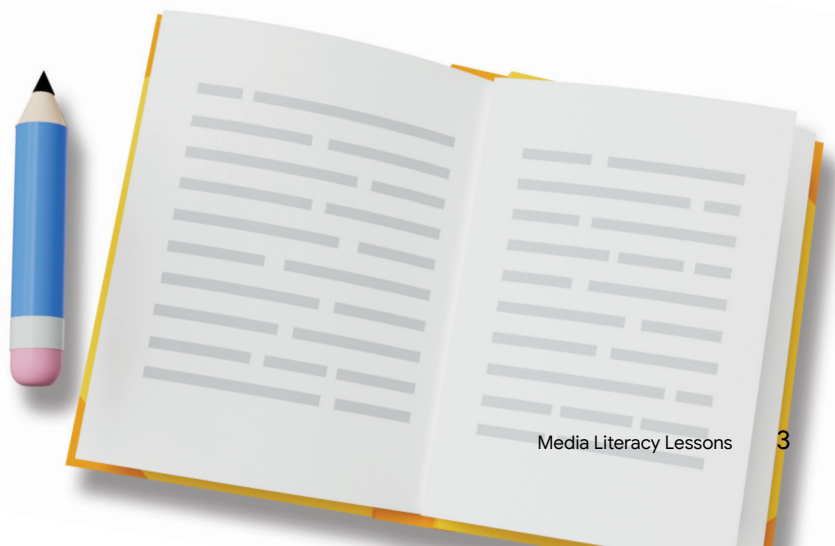
The way a person understands a message, or the meaning they get from it

Media

An idea, message, piece of information, etc. communicated, shared or broadcast online or offline, in text, photos, sound or video. Examples of media: TV, books, email, newspapers, a website, an app, a t-shirt, a painting in a museum or an ad on the side of a city bus—whatever has information on or in it, even a logo or tagline like “Just do it.”

Representation

A picture, symbol, or description that says a lot about (or expresses a truth about) a thing, a person, or a group



Share with Care: Lesson 1

That's not what I meant!

Using only emojis, students create “t-shirts” to represent themselves. In the process, they learn that different people can interpret the same message differently.

Background for teachers

When we wear t-shirts featuring corporate logos, sports teams, schools, musicians, politicians, etc., we are essentially walking billboards. This activity demonstrates that a t-shirt is both direct communication and media at the same time and helps students see that screens aren't the only kind of place where media can be found.

Goals for students



- ✓ **Learn** the importance of asking the question: How might others see this message differently from me?
- ✓ **Grow awareness** of the many visual cues people use to communicate.
- ✓ **See** that sharing something online as well as on a t-shirt is making media.
- ✓ **Learn** what “context” and “representation” mean.

Let's talk



Has anyone ever misunderstood something you said, did, wrote, or posted online? Did they get mad or sad, so that you had to explain that you didn't mean what they thought you meant?

Sometimes when we are communicating, we know what we mean, but the people we are communicating with don't understand, especially if we aren't in the same space. That's because people's experiences affect the way they interpret things like images and words.

To add to the confusion, there are a lot of messages we communicate without even knowing it. We tell people who we are—and judge who they are—using cues like our clothes, our hair style, and even the way we walk or gesture with our hands. This is called “representation”—expressing something about a thing, person, or group by using pictures, symbols, style, and words.

Here's an example: If you were online and saw a picture of a person wearing a jersey with a sports team logo, you would probably think that the person is a fan of that team, and you'd probably be right. That's because most of us recognize the design of sports jerseys—we know that is sports “code.” So even if we aren't sure which team is being represented, we know it's probably a sports team.

But what if you saw a picture of someone wearing a cheese wedge on top of their head? What would you think about that person? If you live in Wisconsin or you're a football fan, you know that "cheese head" is a nickname for Green Bay Packers fans. The person in the picture was using the cheese wedge hat to represent their support for the Packers.

If you didn't know the Packers fan "code," you might think that the cheese hat was part of a Halloween costume or just plain weird. You might even be tempted to comment on how weird it was. That might make Packers fans mad. To them, your comment is rude, and they might be tempted to respond with a mean comment about you. That might make you mad, so we end up with a mess of negative comments and hurt feelings.

So how do we make sure other people will understand what we mean when we post online? One way is to see ourselves as media creators—not just passive viewers or consumers. Every time we create an online profile, text someone, comment in game chat, share a picture—sometimes even wear a t-shirt!—we are making media. Like all good media creators, we want to be thoughtful about the media we make and share by pausing before we post and asking: "How might someone who is different from me interpret my message?"

Activity



Materials needed

- ✓ Lesson 1 Handout A: Blank T-Shirt (one per student)
- ✓ Lesson 1 Handout B: Emoji grid (projected or posted so everyone can see)
- ✓ Markers, colored pencils, or crayons to draw with
- ✓ Tape (or a way to display t-shirt drawings for a walkabout)

1. Describe yourself with emojis

To help us think about being skillful media creators, we're going to decorate t-shirts. Using the handout of the blank t-shirt outline, draw a representation of yourself using only emojis. You can use one, two, or three emojis, but no more. You can copy emojis from the grid or invent your own.

2. Show and tell

Pair up and try to guess what the emojis on your partner's t-shirt say about them. Are your guesses accurate, or do you have to explain to each other what your emoji picks mean?

3. Learn about each other

Post the "t-shirts" around the room so everyone can look at everyone else's shirt. Can you accurately match each shirt with its owner?

4. As a class, discuss:

- What made it hard or easy to match shirts with classmates? What did you notice about the symbols on the shirts that were easy to match? Were some emojis used by lots of people? Were some used by only one person?

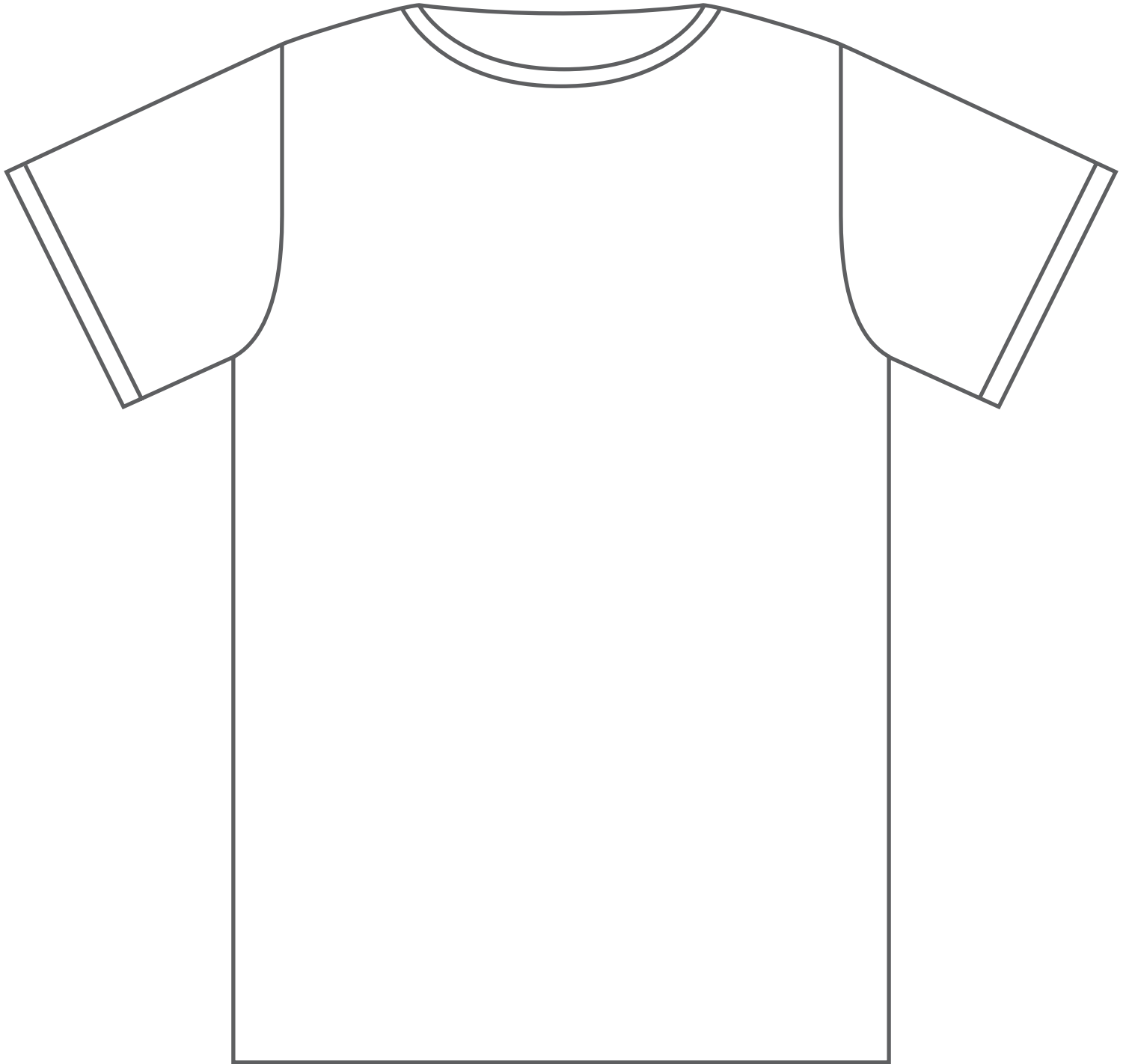
- Did everyone agree on the meaning of every emoji? How can context change the meaning of the emoji? Look at the emoji of the hands with the two fingers. How do you know if it means peace, victory, or the number 2? How about the fire emoji? Does it mean danger/emergency? Really popular or successful (“You’re on fire, dude!”)? Does the meaning change, depending on where it appears (grinning emoji on your homework might mean that your teacher thinks you did good work, but in a text from a friend it might mean they’re happy or joking)? Does the meaning change depending on what other emojis it’s with?

Takeaway

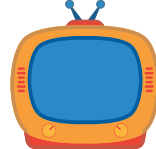
As media creators, before we post messages or pictures online, it’s a good idea to pause and ask: “How could someone who is different from me interpret this? Am I sure they’ll understand what I mean? Could they take it wrong?” And we should ask ourselves the same things before we post or comment too. “Am I sure I understand what they mean? How can I know?”



Lesson 1 Handout A
Blank t-shirt



Lesson 1 Handout B
Emoji grid



Share with Care:

Vocabulary

Frame

When you take a photo or video of a landscape, person, or object, the frame is what defines the section that the viewer can see. The part you decide to leave outside the frame is what your viewer won't be able to see.



Share with Care: Lesson 2

Frame it

Students learn that what we see in visual media may not be the whole story and what is framed affects the message.

Background for teachers

Media are made by people who make choices. The most basic of these are what to include and exclude. This lesson helps students see themselves as media makers when they decide what to share online.

Goals for students



- ✓ **Visualize themselves** as media creators.
- ✓ **Understand** media makers make choices about what to show and what to keep outside the frame.
- ✓ **Use** the concept of framing to understand the difference between what to make visible and public and what to keep secure or private.

Let's talk



Media makers control how much information they want to share by framing. They decide what to include inside the frame (what we can see), and they decide what stays outside the frame (what's invisible).

Activity



Materials needed

- ✓ Index cards and scissors (one set per student)
- ✓ Lesson 2 Handout: What's in the frame? or screen or smartboard with images projected

Run through each activity as a class, then discuss:

1. Framing

All pieces of media are the product of a series of choices by their media makers. One important choice is what to include and another is what to leave out. When we take pictures or video, “in” and “out” are separated by a frame.

To see how this works, take your index card and cut a rectangle out of the center to make your own frame.

Hold the frame at arm’s length and move it slowly toward your face and back out (you could also try this with the zoom function on a camera). What do you notice about what you can see inside the frame? How about if you move it side to side? Is there a way to hold the frame so you can see some of your classmates but not others, or some of the things on a wall but not others?

When you control the frame, you are the media maker. You have the power to decide what to include or leave out. What you choose to leave outside the frame is still there in real life, but people who view the media you made would never be able to see it.

2. Keep it in or leave it out?

Grab a handout, and look at picture 1A. What do you think you’re looking at and how do you know? Now look at 1B. How does the added information help you get a better idea of what you’re looking at?

Try it again with picture 2A. What do you think is casting the shadow? What’s your evidence? 2B adds more information. Was your guess correct?

3. Too Much Information (TMI)?

Extra information isn’t always welcome. Sometimes it’s a distraction that takes away from our ability to enjoy or understand the smaller frame image. Take a look at example #3 on the handout.

It’s fun to see how things are made sometimes. But what would it be like if every time you watched a movie, a TV show, or video, you weren’t just seeing the small frame—what if you were also seeing all the cameras, microphones, crew members, and the edges of the set? Do you think you would enjoy the story as much?

4. You decide

Every time you share something online, you are making media. And like the producers of a film, video or TV show, you can decide what people will see—what’s inside the frame and what stays out of sight, outside the frame.

Takeaway

As a media maker, you put a “frame” around what you share online so other people see only what you want them to see.



Lesson 2 Handout
What's in the frame?



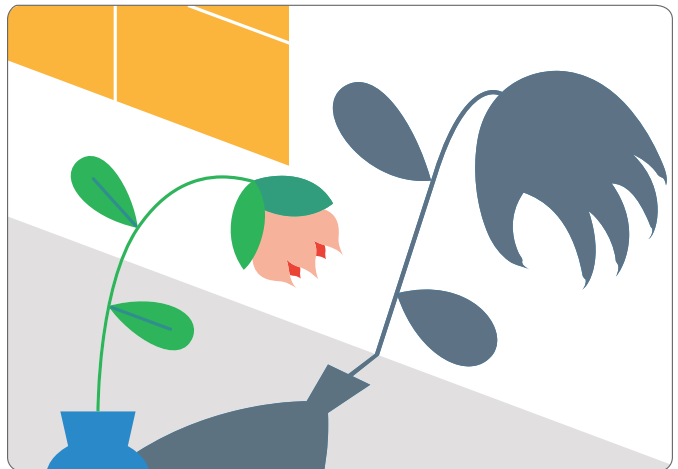
1A



1B



2A



2B



3A



3B

Unit 2:

Don't Fall for Fake



Steering clear of scammers, fakers, info that doesn't help and other Internet stuff that tries to trick your brain—and learning how to find the good stuff

Media literacy lesson overview

Lesson 3 Is that really true?

Grades 2-6

Lesson 4 Spotting untrustworthy information online

Grades 4-6

Themes

It's important for kids to understand that contracts or content they encounter online aren't necessarily true or reliable, and could involve efforts to trick them or steal their information, identity or property. Online scams aim to get Internet users of all ages to respond to fraudulent posts and pitches--sometimes from people pretending to be someone they know.

Goals for students

- ✓ **Understand** that what people tell you online isn't necessarily true.
- ✓ **Learn** how scams work, why they're a threat, and how to avoid them.
- ✓ **Determine** the validity of information and messages online and be wary of manipulation, unsubstantiated claims, fake offers or prizes and other online scams.

Standards addressed

ISTE Standards for Educators

ISTE Standards for Students

AASL Learning Standards

Don't Fall for Fake

Lesson 3 Vocabulary

Credible

Believable, trustworthy; someone who is credible uses evidence, and you can be confident they are telling the truth.

Expertise

Special skill or knowledge about a particular thing; experts have expertise.

Motive

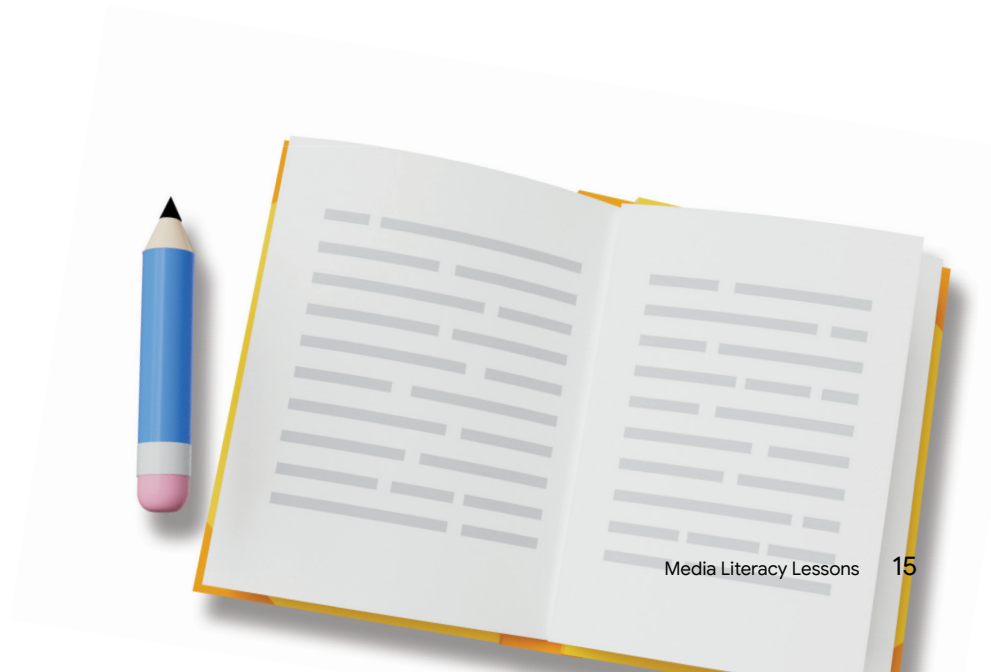
The reason that someone does something; intention

Source

Someone or something that provides information

Vlogger

A person who is known for regularly posting short videos on a blog or social media



Don't Fall for Fake: Lesson 3

Is that really true?

Students learn three steps and four questions (some of which they may already use) to help analyze information to see if it's credible.

Background for teachers

In addition to helping students use analytical questions to evaluate source credibility, we also want them to understand that information comes from lots of places (not just textbooks). So they need to apply their skills to analyze all types of media. When they get to that point, they're ready to move on to analyzing special categories of media, like news or scientific data.

About this lesson

This media literacy lesson is good for everybody to learn, but may be a little over the heads of students in grades 2–3. See a suggested modification for those students below under “Activity.”

Goals for students



- ✓ **Identify** the tools you already use to know that information is credible.
- ✓ **Consider** how certain things like expertise and motive affect credibility.
- ✓ **Learn** 4 questions for evaluating source credibility.
- ✓ **Understand** that a source that's credible on one topic is not necessarily credible on other topics.
- ✓ **Know** that checking multiple sources can help you see whether information is credible.

Let's talk



What makes something or someone credible or trustworthy?

Every day you make decisions about what to believe and what not to believe. Was that video you saw credible? Was it trying to make you believe something? Is your older brother telling you the truth or just teasing? Is that rumor you heard about a friend true? What do you do when you're trying to decide if someone is telling the truth? Do you already use these clues?:

What you know about a person

For example, you know if a classmate is really good at something or has a history of making up stories or playing jokes on people or being mean, so you can usually tell when they are serious about something or not.

What a person knows about you

For example, your parents know what kinds of foods give you a stomachache, but the ads on TV do not, so you follow your parents' advice about what to eat. The school librarian knows your interests and what kinds of books you like, so you trust her book recommendations.

Tone of voice and facial expression

For example, you know that your friend means the opposite of what they say if they roll their eyes and act snarky while they tell you they had a terrible time at the new skate park.

The situation

For example, when friends are playing around and one teases you about your new haircut, you know it's just a joke. But if someone at school says the exact same words to embarrass you in front of the whole class, it's an insult.

When we hear things from a media source like a video, a person on TV, or website, we don't personally know the source and they don't know us. So we may not be sure about whether to believe them.

Even when someone we know sends us a text, there are no clues from facial expressions or tone of voice, so we might not be sure what they mean. That's when we need to ask questions.

Activity



Materials needed

- ✓ A sheet of paper and something for each student to write with
- ✓ Lesson 3 Handout A: Deciding what's credible (one per student)
- ✓ Lesson 3 Handout B: Source PROs and CONs (one per student)

Recommended modification for grades 2–3: If you feel your students are ready to discuss whether a source is credible, complete steps 1 and 2 only.

1. Evaluating sources

If you wanted a recommendation for a great new video game, would you ask your grandmother? Or, to ask it another way, is your grandmother a credible source for information on video games? A credible source is one that we can trust to give us accurate information that tells us what we need to know.

Make two lists to explain the benefits and drawbacks of asking your grandmother for video game advice, one with PROs (the benefits) and one with CONs (reasons why she wouldn't be the best source).

Did your list look something like the box on your handout?

PRO	CON
Grandma loves me and wants me to be happy	Grandma doesn't play video games and doesn't know much about them
Grandma is pretty good at finding information when she doesn't know the answer herself	Grandma doesn't know which games I already have or what types of games I like

If your list looked like that, you've just used two of the most common tools that we have to decide if a source is credible: **motive** and **expertise**. "Motive" is someone's intention, the reason they say or do something. "Expertise" is a special skill or knowledge about a particular thing; experts have expertise.

Which item in the list gives you information about grandma's motives? Which items say something about her expertise? So is the grandma on this pro/con chart a credible source for information about which new video game to get? She wouldn't lie, but it is probably better to ask someone who cares about us and also knows something about gaming and the types of games we like. Both of those things, right?

We may also know that Dad is a great cook but is clueless about fashion, our coach knows basketball but not gymnastics, or that Grandma can fix almost any toy but doesn't know anything about video games. Just because a person is an expert on one thing doesn't make them an expert on everything.

2. Make your own pros and cons list

This may be the first time you have thought about how it helps to use motive and expertise as clues to decide what information sources are credible, so let's practice some more and discuss:

Imagine that you want to know how to be a better soccer player. Make pro/con lists for these choices so you can decide if they're credible sources:

- Your grandma
- A blog by a winning high school basketball coach
- The best player on your soccer team
- A website that sells soccer shoes and gives advice
- Videos that teach soccer practice techniques

What do you notice about the strengths and weaknesses of each source?

- Is there one who knows how to teach, but may not be familiar with soccer skills?
- Is there one who is a soccer expert, but may not know how to teach?
- Is there one whose advice always seems to include buying something from them?
- Is there one who knows soccer, but doesn't know you or which skills you need to work on?

So who would be a good source to go to and why do you think so?

Credibility is rarely an all-or-nothing thing. Most sources have strengths and weaknesses. That's why the very best answers often come from asking many sources and comparing their answers.

3. Steps to figure out what's credible

Credibility isn't just about who we believe. It's also about *what* we believe—what ideas, images and information. We get ideas about the world from all sorts of places, not just directly from people. A movie about a tsunami shows a giant wave—taller than a skyscraper—heading toward people on shore. Is that what tsunamis really look like? An ad makes you think that most scientists are men with crazy hair who wear thick glasses and white lab coats all the time. Is that true?

We can check out any source using the **3 Steps** on the “Deciding what's credible” handout. They're about what we just learned about motive and expertise.

Step 1: Use common sense

Ask yourself: Is it logical—does it make sense?

If a) what you're seeing doesn't make sense, b) you know it isn't true from your own experience, or c) it just doesn't work with facts you already know, you might be looking at a source that is not credible!

Step 2: 4 questions to ask

Two about motive and two about expertise:

Motive

1) What does this source want me to do or believe and why would they want me to do or believe that?

To answer this, you could ask yourself: Does the source make money if you follow their advice? If so, that can reduce their credibility. For example, do you think an influencer earns a fee if you buy the product they're wearing or talking about? Does a professional athlete wear a certain brand of shoe or shirt just because they like that brand or because they're paid to talk about it? Money can often be one reason why you're seeing a logo or brand name in a video or ad—it can affect what the influencer or athlete is telling you (and what they're not telling you). They probably don't intend to trick you, but it's possible that making money is more important to them than giving you all the facts or saying what is good for you.

2) Who benefits and who might be hurt if people believe this source?

This isn't always easy to tell. Here's an example:

Imagine an ad for an app that promises to make you a better student.

- What are the possible benefits? The app maker would benefit if you buy the app because they would make money. And you might benefit if the app really helped you.
- Who might be hurt if you believed the ad? You might be wasting your money if you bought the app. You might also be spending time practicing the wrong things, and then actually do worse in school. Or you might rely on the app, which can only make guesses about what you need, instead of asking for help from your teacher, who actually knows what you need.

Expertise

1) Does this source know me or care about me?

The answer to this question depends on the information you're looking for. If you're checking some information about plastic water bottles polluting the ocean, it really doesn't matter if the source knows you or not. But if a site promises that you will love their new toy, it would need to know what kinds of toys, games, or activities you like in order for their promise to be credible.

2) Does this source know a lot about this topic? How did they learn what they know?

Some people think that the easiest way to find credible information is to ask a digital voice assistant. Digital assistants seem to know everything! Did you ever wonder how they can know all those answers? They use mathematical calculations (called "algorithms") to find answers. But do they always give accurate answers? For simple questions that only have one possible answer (like the temperature outside or the name of a celebrity famous for singing a particular song), they are usually a credible source. But if the question is complicated, it would be better to start with people or groups who have lots of experience or PhDs related to your topic. Then you can use a voice assistant to confirm that information (see Step 3 about that).

Step 3: Confirm

Ask yourself: Do other credible sources back up what this source says?

The job isn't just to check more sources. It's to look for a variety of sources. If you can't find a variety of credible sources that confirm the source you are checking, you shouldn't believe that source.

4. Check your sources

Now that you understand the four questions, it's time to practice. Pick a question related to something we are covering in class or something you have seen online. Find a source that provides an answer to that question and, in small groups, use the questions on the handout to decide if the source is credible.

If you need some ideas, here you go:

- You need ideas for a birthday present for your friend. An ad for a local store claims that their search tool, which has every item offered by the store, can help you find a gift for anyone on your list. Does that work for you?
- You are reading online reviews of a new pizza place and notice that three of the six 5-star reviews are from people with the same last name as the restaurant. Two other reviews say it is the best pizza on the planet and one says it was not bad for a cheap slice. There are also 14 negative comments. Would the positive reviews convince you to try their pizza?
- A pop-up ad says that you are part of a very small group that has been selected to try a special "mermaid pill" that will give you the power to breathe underwater without scuba gear. All you have to do is send \$9.99 to cover shipping. Would you do it? Why or why not?
- You like a lot of the videos by a popular vlogger because they're funny, but they also say nasty things about minority groups that you don't like. Do you buy what they say because they're funny and really popular? Do you think that influences people?

Takeaway

Questions are our friends. When you ask questions about sources and the information they provide, you'll get much better information. The more sources you use, the better. And remember that a great source for one subject doesn't mean it's great for every subject.

Lesson 3 Handout A

Deciding what's credible

Helpful steps to identify credible from non-credible sources:

Step 1**Use common sense**

Is it logical?

Step 2**Ask questions**

Not just any questions, but these four:

Expertise

- *Does this source know me or care about me (and does that matter)?*
- *Does this source know a lot about this topic? How did they learn what they know?*

Motive

- *What does this source want me to do or believe and why would they want me to do or believe that?*
- *Who benefits and who might be hurt if people believe this source?*

Step 3**Confirm**

Do other credible sources back up what this source says? Use online search—or work with your school media specialist in the library—to find other sources of information about your subject (the sources could be books or news or magazine articles, online or offline). Go through Steps 1 and 2 with these sources too—ask the same questions about them. If they're giving you the same information about your subject, it's pretty likely they're confirming that your source is credible.

Lesson 3 Handout B

Source PROs and CONs

PRO	CON

Don't Fall for Fake

Lesson 4 Vocabulary

Deceptive

False; an action or message designed to fool, trick, or lie to someone

Deceptive news

News that intentionally lies or distorts the truth by changing it a little—the popular name for it these days is “fake news.”

Disinformation

False information that is intended to trick or mislead people

Evidence

Facts or examples that prove something is true or false

Misinformation

False information

Skeptical

Willing to question what you see, including claims that something is true or real

Clickbait

Content that attracts attention and could make you want to click on an ad or a link by using interesting formatting, grabby images, or catchy headlines



Don't Fall for Fake: Lesson 4

Spotting untrustworthy information online

Students learn how to use clues and questions to analyze the information they see and spot disinformation.

Background for teachers

Media literacy questions and observation techniques give students tools to navigate their way through disinformation without getting stuck in arguments or hurting relationships with friends and family. They need to ask questions and get used to applying critical inquiry to information that comes their way.

Goals for students



- ✓ **Identify** clues that indicate when a news or information source is deceptive.
- ✓ **Use** analytical questions and careful observation to evaluate source credibility.
- ✓ **Understand** the importance of checking a source's credibility before sharing their message.
- ✓ **Develop** the habit of analyzing all news and information, not just the stories we think are suspicious.

Let's talk



Did you ever play one of those games where you hunt for mistakes hidden in a picture? Sometimes dealing with news is like that. There are a lot of people and groups who are so passionate about what they believe that they twist the truth to get us to agree with them. When their twisting is disguised as a news story, that's disinformation.

Some people don't learn how to spot disinformation, but they share it anyway. That's how it spreads. And when people make choices about the things they do or believe based on that disinformation, it can get really hard for people to listen to each other calmly, disagree respectfully, understand each other better, and solve problems. So, if something looks or sounds like news, how can we tell the difference between what's real or credible and what's fake or misleading? There are clues we can learn to spot it—tricks used by people who are trying to mislead you. And there are questions we can ask that help us spot stories that aren't based on facts.

Activity



Materials needed

- ✓ Lesson 4 Handout A: Spot the differences (one per student)
- ✓ Lesson 4 Handout A answers: One per student—can be printed out on the back side of Handout A
- ✓ Lesson 4 Handout B: Spotting phony URLs (one per student)
- ✓ Lesson 4 Handout B answers: One per student—can be printed out on the back side of Worksheet A
- ✓ Lesson 4 Handout C: Inspecting headlines (one per student)

1. What's wrong with this picture?

Take a look at the picture on your handout. Look carefully. Can you spot the differences between the two pictures?

Note to teacher: Don't pass out the Answers handout until the students have had time to spot the differences.

Trying to tell if a news story is real or fake is sort of like this picture game. By looking really carefully, you can find important information. And it's a lot easier if you know what to look for.

So here are some clues to finding disinformation. If you spot these things, you are probably looking at a fake, or deceptive, story.

Spotting phony URL Handout

The first thing to look at is the URL (web address) for the site that published the story. Some fake sites try to fool you by choosing names that mimic a real site but with small differences. Most companies use short URLs because they are easier to remember and type, so URLs with added, unnecessary letters are often sites with false information.

Look at the worksheet:

- Circle all of the URLs that you think are real.
- When everyone is done, look at the answer key. Did you get them all right?

How could you check to see if a URL was a real news site? One way is to do a web search for the news organization or the URL. If the organization is credible, a box can appear to the right of the search results on many platforms with a description of the organization, including their website address. If the URL isn't credible, you will often be able to scroll down and see headlines about the site being reported as a fake—or you'll find out the site isn't available anymore.

2. Inspecting headlines

Sometimes someone shares a news story without a URL. In those cases, here are some clues to use:

- a) A story starts with a picture of something that would interest us, like a cute dog, a celebrity, or an unusual stunt. But when we click, the story has little or nothing to do with the picture.
- b) Instead of letting you decide for yourself, people who are trying to get you to agree with them sometimes use things like **boldface**, ALL CAPS, underlining, or exclamation points to get you to think what you're seeing is important and click on them. That's called clickbait. Real journalists don't use those techniques.

c) To get you to read a story, some people include words in the headline like “shocking” or “outrageous” or “surprising.” They know words like that make us curious. But *real* journalists let the news speak for itself. They tell the story and let us decide if it is shocking or surprising.

For example, look at this picture and headline in handout C.

Here's the story:

“A recent State University survey of teachers found that 86% of teachers do what everyone does after work. They run errands, fix dinner, spend time with family, do household chores, and get ready for the next day. But lately, many teachers have been doing something unexpected.

“A decade ago, economic troubles led many states to slash education budgets. That meant years without a pay raise for teachers. Unable to meet basic expenses on low salaries, many teachers now work second jobs. In some states teachers have even gone on strike for pay increases so they can quit second jobs and devote more time to their students.”

Was the story what you thought it would be? Do you think that the picture and headline were accurate or misleading? What's your evidence?

3. Inspecting sources

When we analyze news, clues can be helpful, but they aren't always enough. Sometimes trustworthy news stories use techniques to attract our attention, and that can make them seem fake. And sometimes fake sources are so good at copying the real thing that it's hard to tell they're not. It's hard to tell them apart. For example...

Do these sound like trustworthy news organizations to you?:

American News

National Review

News Examiner

World News Daily Report

Weekly World News

NewsWatch33

Actually, only National Review is real. How could you find that out? You could start by doing a Web search of the organization's name. See where the name appears besides the organization's own website. If it appears in Wikipedia or an article at a newspaper or news magazine's site, it's probably a credible organization. But see what those articles say about it! It's possible that they're all saying it's fake.

Find a story about your school, community, the latest diet fad, or anything in the news that interests you. Use the 3 Steps on the **Deciding what's credible** handout for Lesson 3, along with the new clues you know, to decide if the story is real or deceptive.

Takeaway

Now that you know how to use clues and questions to spot disinformation, you can ask smart questions and make careful observation part of your daily routine and, with time, you'll be an expert in spotting fake stuff online. You now know how to analyze the information you get online. It's called critical thinking, and it's a media user's superpower.

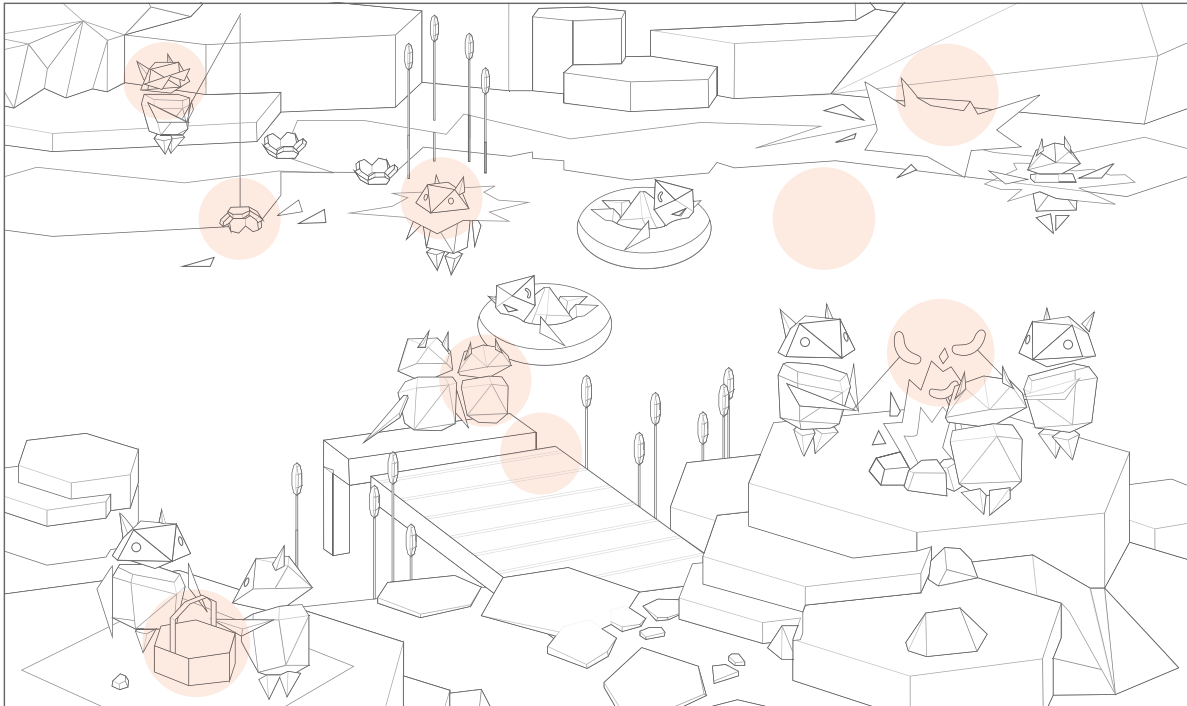


Lesson 4 Handout A

What's wrong with this picture

What if someone told you where to look? Would that make it easier?

Lesson 4 Handout A answers

What's wrong with this picture**Answers**

There are 9 differences, did you spot them all?

Lesson 4 Handout B

Spotting phony URLs

Real or fake? Circle the correct answer.

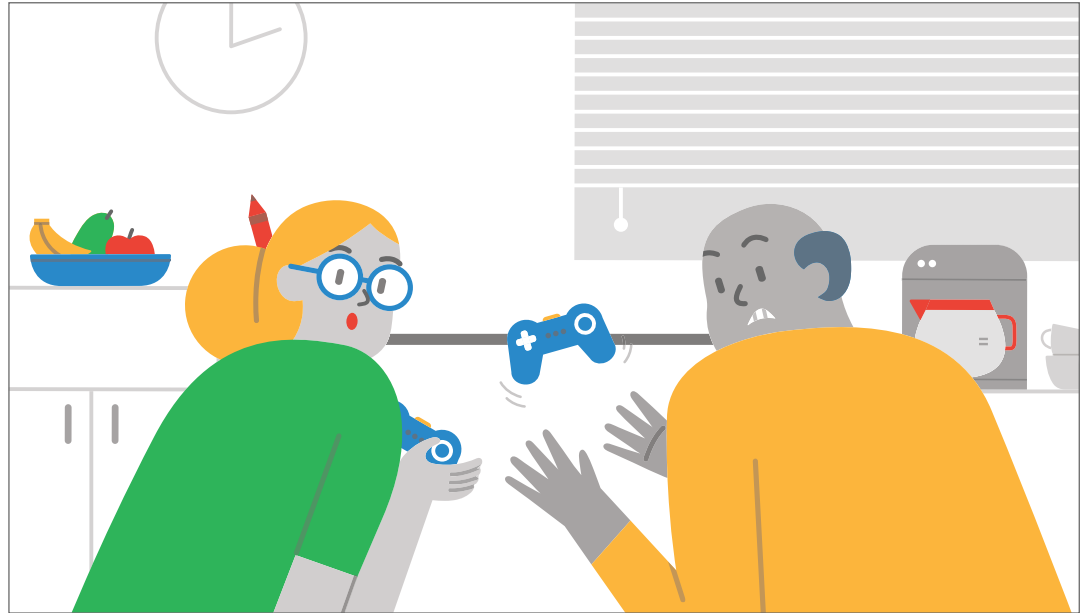
usatoday.com	Real	Fake
abcnews.com.co	Real	Fake
washingqtonpost.com	Real	Fake
abcnews-us.com	Real	Fake
bbc.com/news	Real	Fake
abcnews.go.com	Real	Fake
nytimesofficial.com	Real	Fake
nbc.com.co	Real	Fake
washingtonpost.com	Real	Fake
nytimes.com	Real	Fake
washingtonpost.com.co	Real	Fake
bbc1.site/business-news	Real	Fake
nbcnews.com	Real	Fake

Lesson 4 Handout B answers

Spotting phony URLs**Answers**

usatoday.com	Real	Fake
abcnews.com.co	Real	Fake
washingqtonpost.com	Real	Fake
abcnews-us.com	Real	Fake
bbc.com/news	Real	Fake
abcnews.go.com	Real	Fake
nytimesofficial.com	Real	Fake
nbc.com.co	Real	Fake
washingtonpost.com	Real	Fake
nytimes.com	Real	Fake
washingtonpost.com.co	Real	Fake
bbc1.site/business-news	Real	Fake
nbcnews.com	Real	Fake

Lesson 4 Handout C
Inspecting headlines



The shocking truth about what teachers do after school

Without reading ahead, what do you imagine the story is going to say? Why do you think that? What's your evidence?

Answer:

Unit 3:

It's Cool to Be Kind

Learning and practicing the power of online kindness



Media literacy lesson overview

Lesson 5 How words can change the whole picture

Grades 2-6

Themes

The digital world creates new challenges and opportunities for social interaction, for kids and all the rest of us. Social cues can be harder to read online, constant connecting can bring both comfort and anxiety, and anonymity can fuel crushes and compliments as well as harm to ourselves and others.

It's complicated, but we know that the Internet can amplify kindness as well as negativity. Learning to express kindness and empathy—and how to respond to negativity and harassment—is essential for building healthy relationships and reducing bullying, depression, academic struggles, and other problems.

Research shows that, rather than simply telling kids not to be negative online, two kinds of teaching can help address the underlying causes of negative behaviors offline as well as online: social-emotional learning and bullying prevention. Both can lay a great foundation, encouraging students to interact positively and deal with negativity from the start.

Goals for students

- ✓ **Define** what being positive means and looks like, online and offline.
- ✓ **Lead** with positivity in online communications.
- ✓ **Identify** situations in which a trusted adult should be consulted.

Standards addressed

ISTE Standards for Educators

ISTE Standards for Students

AASL Learning Standards

It's Cool to Be Kind

Vocabulary

Bullying

Purposefully mean behavior that is usually repeated. The person being targeted often has a hard time defending him or herself.

Cyberbullying

Bullying that happens online or through using digital devices

Harassment

A more general term than bullying that can take many forms—pestering, annoying, intimidating, humiliating, etc.—and can happen online too



It's Cool to Be Kind: Lesson 5

How words can change the whole picture

Students learn that combining different media can have a powerful impact on both the viewer and those depicted—as well as how captions can change a photo's effect on us.

Background for teachers

This lesson lays a foundation for elementary grade students by asking them to grapple with simple captions about individual people. This lesson covers these media literacy concepts and questions in developmentally appropriate ways:

1. Knowing that all media are “constructed,” made by people who make choices about what to include and how to present it
2. Routinely asking: “Who made this and why?”
3. Routinely reflecting on the media we create by asking: “How might this message affect others?”

Goals for students



- ✓ **Learn** that we make meaning from the combining of pictures and words.
- ✓ **Grow** awareness of the many visual cues people use to communicate.
- ✓ **See** that sharing something online as well as on a t-shirt is making media.
- ✓ **Learn** what “context” and “representation” mean.

Let's talk



How can words change a picture?!

Pictures combined with words are a powerful way to communicate. Imagine a news photo of a house on fire. One caption says, “Family loses house but everyone gets out safely, including the dog.” That would be sad, and maybe a little scary, right? But what if the caption with that same photo said, “Firefighters set empty house on fire so they could practice using new firefighting tools”? You're still looking at a house on fire, but you have a very different idea about what's happening. You might even feel safe instead of scared.

Activity



Materials needed

- ✓ Pictures of teachers and staff from your school going through their daily routines.
 - ✓ Optional: At least one picture of every student in the class
 - ✓ Lesson 5 Handout A1: How words can change a picture
 - ✓ Lesson 5 Handout A2: How words can change a picture
 - ✓ Lesson 5 Handout B: Sports images
- Optional: Extension

Divide the class into small groups. Give each group either Handout A or Handout B without revealing to students that you're handing out two different versions.

1. Pictures + words

Take a look at each image. With your group, describe the person in each picture. What sort of person do you think they are? Do you think you'd like to spend time with them or be their teammate? Why or why not?

Note to teacher: *It will quickly become clear to the students that groups were looking at pictures with very different captions. Have each group hold up their handout so the others can see the difference. Finally, briefly discuss: What does this show about the power of words to shape our thinking?*

2. Still not sure?

Pass out a copy of Handout C to each student (or each group if the class stayed in their groups).

Take a look at a couple more examples (see Handout C)...

Think about what it would feel like to get or see a message that included one of the pictures with the negative caption. Seeing or hearing negative messages doesn't only hurt the person in the picture. It can make other people who see the picture uncomfortable too.

When you get a message or photo, what do you do? You always have a choice. You can...

- Choose not to share the picture with anyone else, or...
- Tell the sender that you would rather not get messages that are meant to hurt someone, or...
- Support the person in the picture by letting them know that you know it isn't true, or...
- All the above.

You could also send a positive message. Not an answer—just your own positive message. Seeing or hearing positive messages supports the person in the picture and can make others feel good and want to post their own positive messages.

3. Someone at our school

Teacher selects random photo from shuffled set of school staff photos.

For teachers: *For 2–3 weeks prior to the activity, you'll want to gather a few digital photos or assign the students to gather them without revealing what the pictures will be used for (make sure they know they must always ask the subjects' permission). ALT: If that isn't possible, you or the class could gather age-appropriate pictures from magazines or news sources.*

Practice creating different kinds of captions. First make up some captions that would make the person in the photo feel happy or proud. How many different captions can you think up?

Now let's talk about funny captions. Is there a difference between writing what's funny to you and what might be funny to the person in the photo? Is there a difference between a joke that's kind and funny to everyone and a joke that makes fun of someone and is only "funny" to a few people?

Write some captions that are examples of what we discussed, then let's all pick a caption for each photo that's both funny and kind—not hurtful to the person in the photo.

Keep practicing using pictures of other people at our school. Did you get any new ideas about kind things to say by looking at the captions that your classmates wrote?

4. Class collage

Create a collage of pictures of every person in your class, each with a kind caption written on it. **ALT:** If photos of the students aren't available, you or the class could gather age-appropriate pictures from magazines or news sources to write kind captions to.

Takeaway

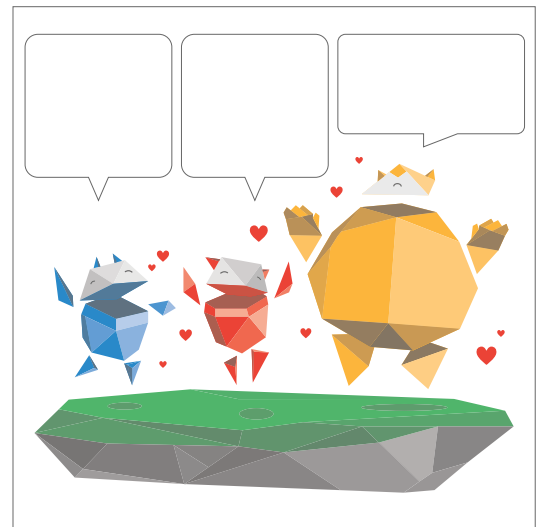
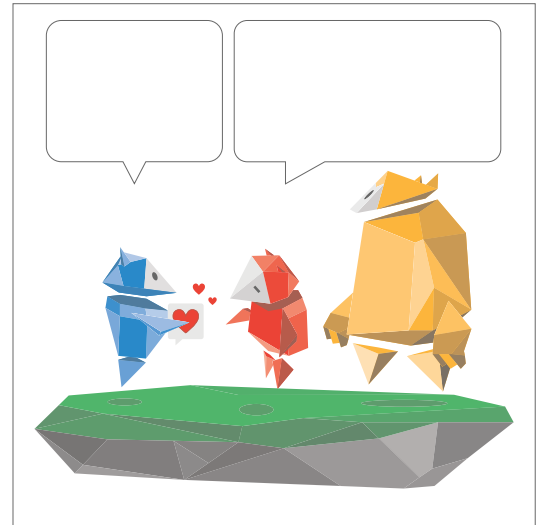
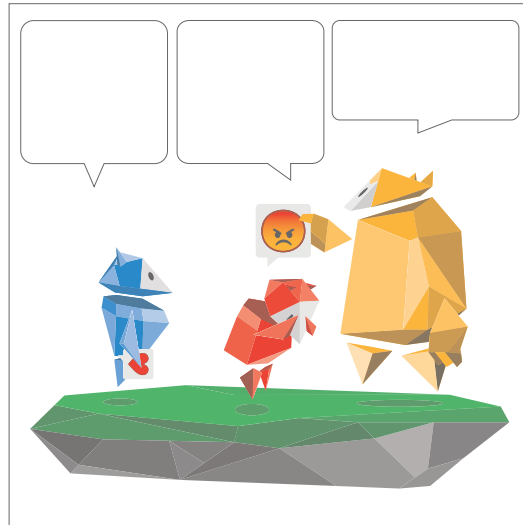
Captions can change what we think—and feel—about a picture and the messages we think we're getting. It's good to think or pause before posting pictures with captions to consider how the whole thing might make others feel. And before accepting pictures and captions that others post, ask, "Who posted this and why?"

Extension



Note to teacher: Make enough copies of this sheet so that, when you divide the class into four groups, each group will have one copy. Have each group work on a different comic strip. When the students have finished, ask if one group will volunteer to share their comic strip and answer the questions below. (Of course, if there's time, see if other groups want to discuss their work.)

Try this experiment. Fill in the thought/conversation bubbles to tell the story you see, then we'll discuss. Did everyone in your group see the same story and want to write the same words? Why/why not? What does the experiment show about how we use words to provide context or understand what a picture is "saying"?



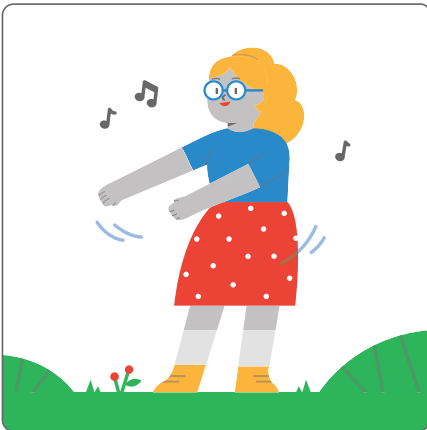
Lesson 5 Handout A1

How words can change a picture - positive captions

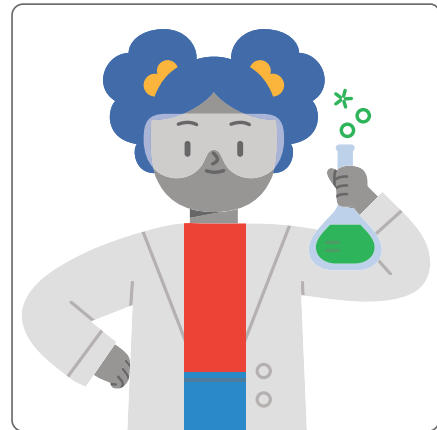
Original artwork wins first place.



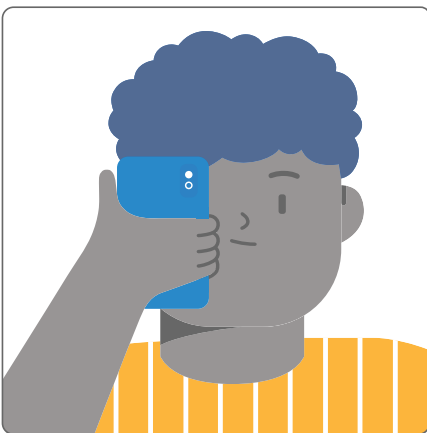
I discovered a new species in the world!



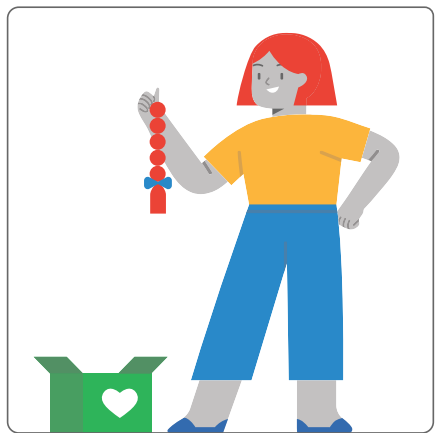
Nailed it!



Youngest scientist in the world!



Finally, my own phone!



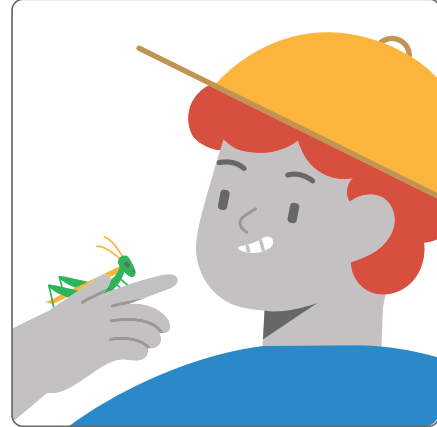
Grew my hair out and donated it to a cancer patient. <3

Lesson 5 Handout A2

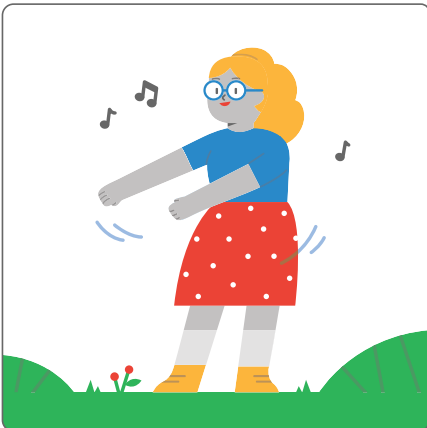
How words can change a picture - negative captions



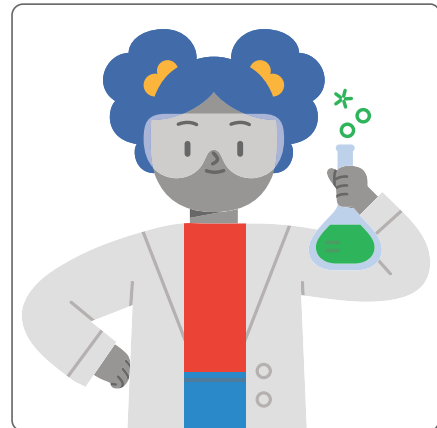
Hot Mess.



Mmm Dinner!



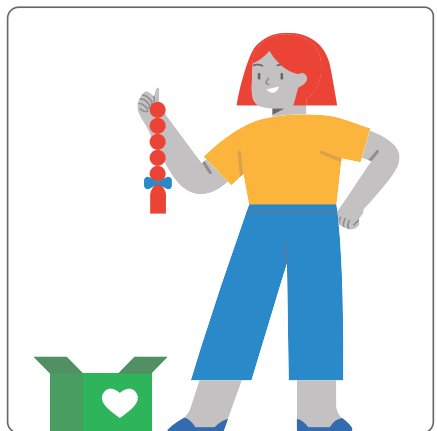
Awkward - not even close!



Nerding out. #lame



Got my mom's lame old phone. :/



WORST. HAIRCUT. EVER!

Lesson 5 Handout B
Sports images



Awesome!



Show Off!



Awesome!



Show Off!

Unit 4:

When in Doubt, Talk It Out



Defining and encouraging Internet Brave behavior

Media literacy lesson overview

Lesson 1 What does it mean to be brave?

ML Grades 2-6

Themes

It's important that kids understand they're not on their own when they see content online that makes them feel uncomfortable – especially if it looks like they or somebody else could get hurt. First, they should never hesitate to get help from someone they trust. Second, it's good for them to know they have options: There are different ways to be brave and take action.

Goals for students

- ✓ **Understand** what types of situations call for getting help or talking things out with a trusted adult.
- ✓ **Consider** what options there are for being brave and why bringing adults into the conversation is important.

Standards addressed

ISTE Standards for Educators

ISTE Standards for Students 2016

AASL Learning Standards

When in Doubt, Talk It Out

Vocabulary

Brave

Having the strength to deal with a challenge or danger or to face a fear. A person can be brave for others as well as themselves. For example, helping someone out even if it feels risky or uncomfortable, such as supporting a person who's being bullied. Bravery or courage doesn't mean not being afraid—it often means doing something good even when we feel nervous or afraid.

Media

An idea, message, piece of information, etc. communicated, shared or broadcast online or offline, in text, photos, sound, or video. Examples of media: TV, books, email, newspapers, a website, an app, a t-shirt, a painting in a museum, or an ad on the side of a city bus—whatever has information on it, even just a logo or tagline like “Just do it.”



What in Doubt, Talk It Out: Lesson 1

What does it mean to be brave?

This lesson is about how media influences us. Students name someone who's done something they consider to be brave. In thinking more deeply about their choice, they're asked to examine where their ideas about bravery come from and to talk it out among themselves.

Background for teachers

We all know that people's thinking can be influenced by media. To help students develop their awareness of that, it can really help to “talk it out” and think out loud together about how that happens. Here are a few important things to keep in mind as you teach this lesson:

- Our ideas are shaped by everything we see, hear, and read.
- We interpret what we see through the lens of our own experiences, so we can take away very different messages from the very same media.
- We learn as much (sometimes more) from pictures as from words.
- Media literacy helps counter stereotypes by helping us become aware of (and challenge) patterns—especially repetition. For example, if all the heroes we see are male, we might get the idea that men are more likely to be heroes—even if no one ever actually tells us that women can't be heroes (the absence of information is something to watch out for too).

Goals for students



- ✓ **Think** about what it means to be brave, including what it means to be brave when we're online.
- ✓ **Identify** the source(s) of our ideas about what it means to be brave.
- ✓ **Develop** the habit of asking: “What are they leaving out?”

Let's talk



What comes to mind when you think about being brave—do you think of movie superheroes or firefighters? Those are great examples, but it's important to remember that we are able to be brave too.

Activity



Materials needed

- ✓ A sheet of paper and something for each student to write with
- ✓ A whiteboard or other way to write a list that everyone can see
- ✓ 3 large labels with bold lettering that students can see from 8'–10' away, one for each category:
 - “A character in media” (not a real person);
 - “Someone I know personally”;
 - “Someone I know about” (in history or in the news)

Before beginning, post one label in each of 3 corners or areas of the classroom.

1. Today we're going to talk about being brave

Using the definition in the Vocabulary for this lesson, discuss with the class what it means to be brave.

On a sheet of paper, take a few seconds to write down the name of someone—real or fictional, living now or from history—who has done something you think is brave. If you don't know their name, write down their job. Don't show anyone what you've written yet.

2. Was it easy or difficult to think of someone?

Raise your hand if you thought it was easy. If it was hard, that's fine, but why do you think it was? Do we talk about being brave a lot, or not very often? Where do you usually see or hear about people doing brave things?

3. The big reveal

Now you can reveal what person or character you picked by going to the label on the wall that fits the kind of individual you chose.

So let's talk. Notice how many of you named a media character or even a real person who you knew about only through media (like a book or movie). What do media messages tell us about what it means to be brave?

Media makers need to make money, and that means they need lots of us to pay attention to them. They present to us the most dramatic, action-filled kinds of bravery. So we see lots of superheroes and first responders and soldiers. Those can be great examples, but they definitely don't tell the whole story, right? It's always smart to ask, **“Who are they leaving out?”**

So what other examples of bravery are there? Where else have you learned about what it means to be brave?

4. Revealing more

In the groups you're in now, talk about the reasons for your choices: What made your person brave? Are there differences in the types of brave things that real people do and the brave things that media characters do—if yes, what differences?

[Optional prompt] When you think of the word “brave,” what gender do you think of? Does bravery look different for people of different genders?”

After a few minutes of group discussion, bring the class back together and—on the whiteboard or easel—take notes...

Let's think about this:

- Did anyone name a person who saved others from physical danger? (Raise your hand if your answer is “yes” to each question.)
- Did anyone name a person who stood up for someone who was being bullied? Most people would agree that saving someone from being physically hurt—especially if you might get hurt yourself—is brave.
- What about saving someone from having their feelings hurt—or being kind or supportive to them if their feelings already were hurt? Is that also brave? Why/why not?
- Or what about reporting something you see that makes you feel super uncomfortable—when you're not sure how the adult you report it to would react? Would you consider that brave too?

Raise your hand if you can tell me about someone who was brave in these other ways—or if you have another kind of brave behavior in mind. I'd love to hear about that.

5. Discuss what it takes to be brave

Look carefully at the list we all created about what it takes to be brave. Discuss:

- Have you done something brave or seen one of your classmates be brave? If so, would you raise your hand and tell us about it?
- Can you imagine yourself doing any of the things on the list?
- Can you think of a situation where being kind is brave?
- What about online (or on a phone)—can you think of ways you could be brave online?


Takeaway

Bravery is about taking risks to help people—in all kinds of ways, big and small. Media can shape the way we think about things, like what it means to be brave, but the media doesn't always present all the possibilities. So it can help to ask, “What or who are they leaving out?” When we're online, we also need to think about taking risks to save people from having their feelings hurt. We all can choose to be brave in lots of ways.

Be Internet Awesome.

Be Internet Awesome.
[g.co/BeInternetAwesome](https://www.google.com/BeInternetAwesome)



 Safer with Google