

# Introduction to Thinking Critically Online

<b>Module:</b>	Managing Online Information
<b>Suitable for:</b>	Year 5, 6
<b>Total Time:</b>	50-120 minutes (see <i>Companion Guide</i> for time alterations)

The **objective** of the *Interactive Learning* lesson is:

- To recognise what type of information online can be considered reliable.

By the end of the *Interactive Learning* lesson, **students should be able to:**

- explain the difference between a belief, opinion and fact, and can give examples of how they might be shared online
- understand what it means to be sceptical and why this is important
- explain how and why some people might present opinions or misinformation as fact
- evaluate digital content and explain how to make choices about what is trustworthy.

The **objective** of the *Once Upon Online* lesson is:

- To analyse information to make a judgement about probable accuracy.

By the end of the *Once Upon Online* lesson, students **should be able to:**

- describe and demonstrate how to get help from a trusted adult if they feel upset about content they see online
- explain how misinformation may affect someone's emotions or behaviours, and why misinformation may be harmful
- demonstrate how to analyse and evaluate the validity of information.

[Outcomes sourced from Education for a Connected World](#)

**Note:** Students should access the Digital Matters web app via [www.internetmatters.org/digital-matters](http://www.internetmatters.org/digital-matters) on their device to participate in each part of their learning journey below. To begin, they should choose the 'Interactive Learning' option. If students do not have access to a device, please login on your teacher's account and project the screen for all students to see. Further instructions can be found in the Companion Guide.

Before the Lesson:

## A Baseline Knowledge (10 mins)

### Task Instructions

Have students complete the baseline assessment to gauge their prior knowledge and understanding of the lessons' learning outcomes.

They should read each question and answer them with what they already know or think they know in the 'I think I know...' sections. They should leave the 'I have learnt' sections blank.

### Notes

This may be an activity that you do directly before the Interactive Learning or could be done separately in advance of the lesson.



The handout features the 'internet matters.org' logo and the 'digital matters' logo. The title is 'Introduction to Thinking Critically Online'. Below the title, it says: 'Before the lesson, read the questions and complete the 'I think I know' sections with what you think the answers might be. After the lesson, complete the 'I have learnt' sections with what you have learnt the answers are.'

1. What is the difference between a fact, belief and opinion?

I think I know... I have learnt...

2. What does it mean to be 'sceptical' about something?

I think I know... I have learnt...

Use the handout titled 'Introduction to Thinking Critically Online' for this activity.

Alternatively and additionally, this can be done on flipchart paper to be revisited later (and then posted in the classroom for reference); or it may be done on the white board at the front of the class.

Have students complete the questions on their own and then share with the class (to be added to paper/white board/PowerPoint where applicable) if relevant to your class. They can also keep the assessment individual to them.

This will be revisited after the lessons are completed to assess students' progress.

## Activity 1 Starter

## Belief, Fact or Opinion? (15 mins)

## Task Instructions

Take the opportunity to set ground rules for the lesson as outlined in the Companion Guide.

Explain the difference between a fact, opinion and belief.

On screen, students need to identify which statements are facts, which are opinions, and which are beliefs.

## Notes

Students should feel safe and supported during the lesson without any pressure to share their personal thoughts or experiences.

When they do ask a question or share information, other students should be respectful and open to other points of view.

Also introduce the Ask-It Basket where, at any point, students can quietly write down a question and put it in the 'basket' anonymously. For the start of the lesson, have each student write down at least one question they have about the reliability of information online that you will answer later in the lesson and that students can add to as you go.

Once the rules are set, have students go to [internetmatters.org/digital-matters](https://internetmatters.org/digital-matters) and select 'Begin as a student'. Direct them to select the "Managing Online Information" subject and select the first lesson, "Thinking Critically Online". From there, they should select "Interactive Learning" and begin the first activity when you direct them to.

Let children know that clicking on the helper on screen (highlighted by the flashing green ring) will give them extra information to help make their choices.

A **fact** is something that can be proven to be true. An **opinion** is what you think about a topic, which might be different from what other people think. A **belief** is a view based on family, morals, and faith and cannot be proven by science. It might be different from others' beliefs.

*Note: if students do not have internet access, use the Interactive Learning handout that they can fill out as you guide them through on your screen.*

### Stretch and Challenge

- Level 1:** Define what a belief, fact and opinion is.
- Level 2:** Write 3 sentences that show an example each of a belief, fact and opinion.
- Reflection:** after students finish this activity, ask them to think about a belief they have that others don't. What can they do to make sure they don't confuse a belief for fact? This is an independent task and should not be a discussion.

## Discussion A

## What are opinions, facts and beliefs? (5 mins)

## Task Instructions

Discuss the answers from the starter activity: how do we know which is an opinion, fact or belief?

Explain what each statement is and why it is an opinion, fact or belief.

Take a moment to answer a few questions from the Ask-It Basket.

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## Notes

- We should be allowed to use mobile phones in school = opinion: there is research for and against mobile phones in schools, but not everyone may agree, so it isn't a fact.
- Too much screen time can affect your ability to sleep = fact: there are multiple studies that look at the negative effects of too much screen time. If it said 'kids should not spend so much time looking at screens', then it would become an opinion.
- It is wrong to copy someone's homework = belief: this statement says that it is morally wrong to do something, which is a belief. An opinion would be 'students shouldn't copy homework', which could then list the fact-based reasons why.
- Youtube was released in 2005 = fact: this is backed by evidence
- Xbox is my favourite console = fact: although it is personal to the person saying it, it is something they know to be true. If they said 'Xbox is the best console', then that would become an opinion as it's not true for all.

If the Ask-It question links to other parts of the lesson, you may wish to wait to answer it until that point, acknowledging the good quality of the question.

## Activity 2

## Sceptical about misinformation (7 mins)

## Task Instructions

On screen, there are examples of misinformation that is shared around between a group of friends.

Discuss with students features that suggest they should be sceptical.

Have students look at each question and decide what information suggests it is not trustworthy.

## Notes

Clarify what it means to be 'sceptical' about something. Sceptical means thinking about whether something is true or real rather than just accepting it as true. For example, if a classmate says they have the highest IQ in the world, it makes sense to be sceptical and question whether that is true. Asking for evidence is important.

They should check for:

- **sources and evidence** (where is the information coming from and is it trustworthy?)
- **how likely it is to be true** (or is it more likely to be false?)
- **whether it's harmful if false** (who could it hurt?)
- **when the evidence was found** (old sources might have information that is out of date)
- **how reliable the sources are** (have you heard of the sources before or do they seem strange?)
- **accuracy of spelling/grammar** (good spelling and grammar means it was probably checked by multiple people and is more likely to be trustworthy)
- **who posted/created the image or information** (is this persona a good source?)

You may choose to consider the first image together before asking them to work independently to figure out the others.

Example 1: bad grammar, no proof, too many unlikely accomplishments.

Example 2: typos, overused punctuation, 'easy' might not be accurate, using products that aren't designed for that purpose.

Example 3: claims against scientific evidence, not being clear, telling you to ingest things that aren't meant to be ingested, no evidence of fact, selling something.

### Stretch and Challenge

- Level 1:** Why might some people share this kind of false information?
- Level 2:** What could people do to check whether this information is true?
- Reflection:** after students finish this activity, ask them to think about the information they've seen online. Did you ever think some false information was true? Or did you see someone else do this? How could you/they have verified this information? This is an independent task and should not be a discussion.

## Discussion B

## Why do people share misinformation? (3 mins)

## Task Instructions

Discuss the difference between misinformation and disinformation.

Discuss what intent is.

Revisit the third scenario about healing. What might the creator's intent have been? Are the intentions positive?

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## Notes

**Misinformation** is false or inaccurate information that is spread around without bad intentions.

**Disinformation** is false or inaccurate information that is purposely spread to mislead and benefit the sharer usually for a negative reason.

**Intent** is the reason behind sharing something. For example, a funny meme may make you laugh so you send it to a friend because your intent is to make them laugh too.

Answers could include:

- to say science is wrong
- to say doctors can't be trusted
- to make money
- to sell products.

These intentions are not positive.

## Activity 3

## Trust the Source (7 mins)

## Task Instructions

On screen, students have a scenario about a girl named Daisy doing a school research project. Read through as a class.

On their own, students need to read through the facts on screen and select which ones they think are reliable based on their sources.

Review Stretch and Challenge answers.

Take a moment to answer a few questions from the Ask-It Basket.

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## Notes

If the Ask-It question links to other parts of the lesson, you may wish to wait to answer it until that point, acknowledging the good quality of the question.

### Stretch and Challenge

- Level 1:** What are reliable sources that someone could use?
- Level 2:** Think of online sources like websites and make a list of those that might be reliable and trustworthy?
- Reflection:** after students finish this activity, ask them to think about a time they looked online for information. How did you know the information was reliable? What could you do to check future information is reliable? This is an independent task and should not be a discussion.

## Discussion C

## How can you tell what's reliable? (5 mins)

## Task Instructions

As a class, discuss the information sources.

- Which facts did you think were accurate?
- How did you come to this conclusion?

Discuss the answers and why the sources are or aren't reliable.

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## Notes

**Answers**

**A triplet:** because the source is a fansite, it is not reliable. It is not coming directly from Summer Colt. If you can find a source on the fansite that leads directly to the actress, then it could become more reliable.

**Born in London:** because the source is an interview that she did, it is reliable. She is recorded as having said this fact.

**Fastest woman on Earth:** because this is from a comedy show where facts may be embellished for a laugh, it is not reliable. She might enjoy running or maybe she is actually really slow, so this fact is likely a joke and cannot be trusted as reliable (even if she said it herself).

**Favourite movie is Rhinoceros Rules:** because Summer said this during an interview, it can be considered to be true. That doesn't mean it won't change in the future!

**An only child:** because this is a fan theory, it cannot be considered reliable. Unless Summer confirms that she is an only child, this can't be considered true.

**Is a UN ambassador:** because the source is the UN website, this is reliable.

**Favourite animal is a jaguar:** because she said it herself, it can be considered reliable.

**Likes tacos:** because she set her status as such on her own account, this could be considered reliable. However, it's important to remember that not everything people share online is true or can be considered reliable as some people choose to only show details about their life that don't reflect who they are or how they really feel.

**Stop Point**  
Plenary**5 mins**

## Task Instructions

If you would like to split this lesson into two sessions, end here with the following plenary.

Discuss: what purposes could someone have for sharing false or misleading information online?

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## Notes

Possible answers could include:

- To influence people's understanding/beliefs of things like politics, science, history, etc.
- To create a community for/against something
- Political reasons
- Mistrust of certain people
- Genuinely think they're helping
- Sharing without researching
- Enjoy the info and want others to enjoy it.

Provide students with actions they can take to check information is reliable such as websites like Snopes.com, CBBC Newsround, Encyclopaedia Britannica, National Geographic Kids, Swiggle (child-friendly search engine that returns trustworthy results). They can also use library resources (and ask the librarian or another trusted adult for help).

## Start Point Starter

# 7 mins

### Task Instructions

If you have split the lesson into two parts, begin the second part with this starter.

Review rules from last time and answer a few questions from the Ask-It Basket, reminding students of its use.

**Review:** thinking back to the Interactive Learning lesson, what are some ways someone can tell if a source is reliable?

**Discuss:** What makes it easy for people online to think false information is true?

Take a moment to answer a few questions from the Ask-It Basket from the previous lesson.

Have children open the web app.

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### Notes

Students can discuss as a whole class, in groups or in partners. Share as a whole class at the end if the latter two options are chosen.

Answers may include:

- Scrolling makes it easy to read something and then move past it instead of researching it
- It might fit with what they already believe
- The information might seem like it makes sense and could be true
- They trust the people who are sharing the information.

You may choose to answer a few more Ask-It questions than usual to help with review and understanding of the topic.

Have children go to [internetmatters.org/digital-matters](https://internetmatters.org/digital-matters) and select “Begin as a student.” They should then select the “Managing Online Information” subject followed by the “Introduction to Thinking Critically Online” lesson. When you are ready, have them select “Once Upon Online” to get started. They will first need to select a helper before they get to the first scenario.

## Introduction

## Once Upon Online's First Scenario (5-7 mins)

## Task Instructions

Students begin Once Upon Online by choosing their helper to help them through the journey.

Read the first scenario as a class.

Discuss: are the choices Adil is thinking about safe? Why or why not?

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## Notes

Clarify that in real life, we have a lot more choices. However, through Once Upon Online, Adil only comes up with two choices for each scenario. Children should be encouraged to think about the other options Adil could make but realise that they will have to choose just one of the choices Adil has thought of.

Students are tasked with helping Adil reach a positive outcome using their knowledge even if he makes some negative choices.

**Note: if students do not have internet access, use the Once Upon Online template for them to fill in as you guide them through the story on your screen.**

## Activity 4

## Once Upon Online (15 mins)

## Task Instructions

After the first scenario, students can continue on their own. They must fully read each scenario and choose an option to help Adil on his journey. Some choices will lead to positive outcomes while others will be more negative or mixed.

Once students get to the end of the story, they should print out their journey and the reflection questions. Have them answer the questions on the page or in a separate notebook.

## Notes

*Optional: have half the students start by choosing one option while the other half chooses a different option to guarantee different outcomes. This could work especially well for classes who understand the lesson concept really well.*

Accessibility options are available for students who need different fonts or need to have content read for them. It may be advisable to pair some students up or place them in groups with an adult helper so they can all do the journey together with support.

When students select an option, they will get immediate feedback on the effect of their choice. As they go through their journeys, ask them questions such as:

- How might the character feel?
- What other decisions could the character make?
- Is this the right journey for the character? Where might they end up?
- How could the story change if different choices were made?
- What has Adil done to get help from a trusted adult? What could he do?

### Stretch and Challenge

- Level 1:** Ask students to redo the journey by choosing the opposite of their preferred choices. Is the new outcome surprising? Why or why not?
- Level 2:** Ask students to share their endings with peers around them. Are there any similarities? Discuss what options led to the different (or same) end points?
- Reflection:** after students finish this activity, ask them to think about Adil's journey and the choices he made. If you or someone you know shares misinformation as fact, what choices could you make to fix the problem? This is an independent task and should not be a discussion.

## Activity 5: Plenary

## Where did Adil's journey lead? (10 mins)

## Task Instructions

As a class, discuss the outcomes students found. Did everyone end at the same point or were different paths taken? Ask students with different endings to volunteer to share the choices they made to get to that point.

Discuss: in what ways did the misinformation affect Adil's emotions? How did it make him act?

Discuss: how did the story show the harms of sharing misinformation? How were the characters affected?

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## Notes

Ensure that you're choosing volunteers rather than putting children on the spot. Try to choose 3-5 students depending on time available.

While students are sharing their journeys, these are some guiding questions to help them reflect on the journey:

- Why was it better for Adil to choose X instead of Y?
- What are some other choices Adil could have made that weren't in the story?
- Which choices might Adil have found most difficult and why?
- What choices could Adil make to get to a different end point?
- Would someone make the same choices outside of the story? Why or why not?

Introduce the take home activity below.

## Take Home

**10–20 mins**

## Task Instructions

At home, students can discuss their Once Upon Online journey with their parent, carer, older sibling or someone else they live with.

Using the reflection questions, students review their in-class journey and then complete the take home activity that you've chosen.

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## Notes

In the teacher's Companion Guide, you'll find a letter to parents explaining what Digital Matters is and how they can get access to the Parent and Carer Companion Guide. This will help them test or improve their knowledge on the subject as well. If you did not send it home prior to the lesson, sending it home now would help parents understand the app a little better.

You can decide which take home activity would best suit your class:

**Option 1:** Have students show their parents the printout of their journey in Once Upon Online. With their parents' help, have students consider what other choices the characters could have made on their journey and what the results might have been. [Slide 14]

**Option 2:** Students share their Once Upon Online journey and reflection with a trusted adult or older sibling at home. The trusted adult or sibling then should be encouraged to do the journey themselves to see what outcome they get. The student and adult/sibling can then discuss and compare the choices the character made. [Slide 15]

In the next lesson or as a review, students can share the additional options they thought of or the outcomes of the trusted adult/older sibling's journey and what they found out.

After the lesson

## Summative Assessment (10 mins)

Task Instructions

Return to the baseline assessment. Have children fill in the “I have learnt” box for each question either including new information they learnt, information they got wrong or adding to the information they already have.

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Notes

This can be done immediately after the lessons as a part of the plenary or may be done after students have had a chance to complete any take home activities.

You may wish to have students complete the “I have learnt” section in a different colour to the baseline answers for greater contrast.

If this was done as a whole class as well, ask students to share their new knowledge and complete the paper for display in the classroom or the whiteboard/PowerPoint for reference.

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