



How to spot fake news



How do we know what's real and what's fake when we're reading news online or on social media? Use this activity to explore how to judge online sources for accuracy

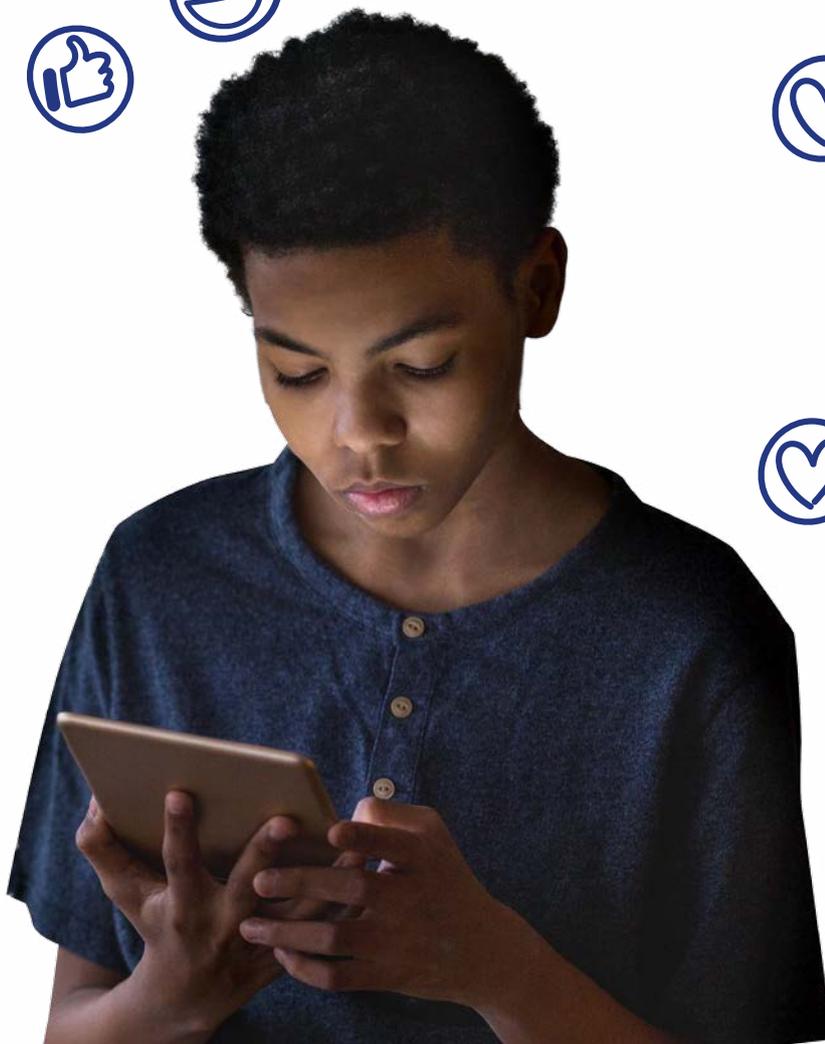
Suitable for Scouts

Before you start

Find out how to stay safe online: scouts.org.uk/volunteers/scouts-at-home/taking-scouts-online/staying-safe-online

You will need (per small group)

- devices with internet access
- 3 tips on how to spot fake news (found over the page)



Time needed
60 minutes

Badge



Nominet partners the Digital Citizen Staged Activity Badge

Partner



Outcomes

Scouts and Explorers will be encouraged to investigate what they think about fake news and bias online. They will explore what they think are the best ways to identify fake news and use tips from experts Sense about Science to analyse what they read. They'll use the internet to research what people are saying about a topic and explore how to tell the difference between opinion and fact.



More information

For more badge resources and activities go to scouts.org.uk/supporters/nominet.



True or False?

3 ways to spot fake news, from experts Sense about Science

1. Look at the source

Who's making the claim? Is it a celebrity, a company or an academic journal? From there you can begin to work out where the claim has come from, and if there's any evidence.

2. Ask questions

Does that source have any vested interests? Are they making money from it? Why are they making this claim? It doesn't always mean the claim's dubious, but it's a good place to start. On Instagram, lots of celebrities get paid to promote a product. They won't necessarily look at the evidence, but they'll say it's effective for a fee.

3. Evaluate evidence

Has it been peer reviewed: have other academics read it and agreed with the claims? Is it just one study, or have multiple studies proven it? Sometimes it's one sensational case that newspapers are talking about, not something that's been subject to different studies, which the scientific community generally agrees upon.

Instructions

1 With their leaders and in small groups, Scouts should choose a topic to discuss that they can research online and then present information they've found from a range of sources. Topics could include things that might impact them, such as lowering the voting age to 16, the protests about climate change or Black Lives Matter, or how lockdown has affected young people.

2 Once their topic has been chosen, each group should gather 3–5 pieces of content that are talking about that subject – these should be from different sources, like online newspapers, videos, tabloids, magazines, influencers on YouTube and other social media posts.

3 The groups should then apply the 3 ways to spot fake news (found on this page) from Sense About Science – a charity that champions using scientific evidence to make decisions that affect us – and use these to analyse their sources and make a call on how reliable they think they are.

4 Come back together afterwards to discuss your findings and what everyone thought of the process. Will the young people look at what they see online more critically now? Do they believe what influencers say on social media?

Take it further

Delve further into analysing news with the Evidence Hunter pack – download it from scouts.org.uk/evidencehunter.