

# BE INTERNET CITIZENS UNIT OF WORK



# CONTENTS



## INTRODUCTION

An overview of the programme, the Unit of Work objectives, how it fits within the school curriculum, safe practice teaching approaches, important ground rules and suggestions for wider student support networks.



## LESSON 1: FACT VS FICTION

- Lesson overview
- Learning objectives, outcomes and key concept definitions
- Full lesson plan including key questions and supporting guidance for teachers
- Handout resources to support lesson delivery



## LESSON 2: THREE SIDES TO EVERY STORY

- Lesson overview
- Learning objectives, outcomes and key concept definitions
- Full lesson plan including key questions and supporting guidance for teachers
- Handout resources to support lesson delivery



## LESSON 3: US VS THEM

- Lesson overview
- Learning objectives, outcomes and key concept definitions
- Full lesson plan including key questions and supporting guidance for teachers
- Handout resources to support lesson delivery



## LESSON 4: SPEAKING UP, SPEAKING OUT

- Lesson overview
- Learning objectives, outcomes and key concept definitions
- Full lesson plan including key questions and supporting guidance for teachers
- Handout resources to support lesson delivery



## LESSON 5: BECOMING AN INTERNET CITIZEN

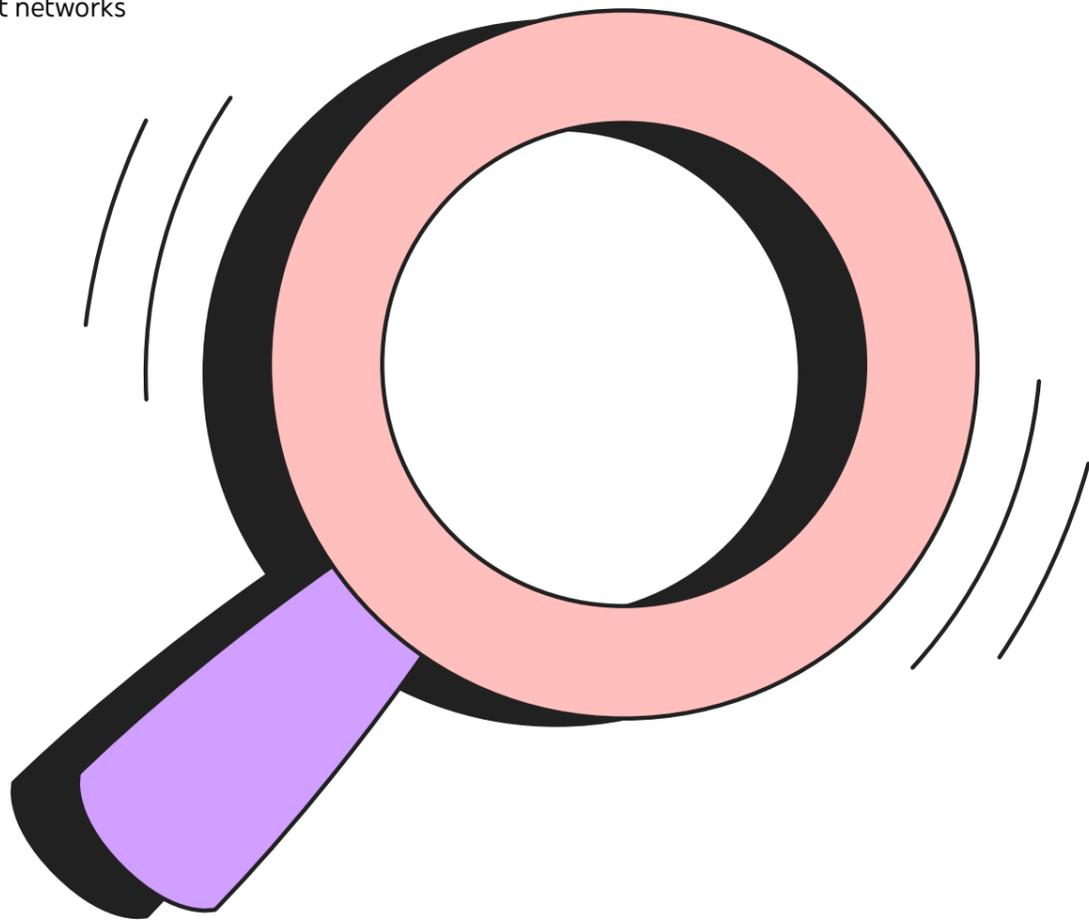
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# INTRODUCTION



# CONTENTS

- 07. Be Internet Citizens programme
- 10. How to use this resource
- 13. Links to UK Curriculum: PSHE Association Programme of Study
- 14. Links to UK Curriculum: Department for Education's RSE and Health Education Guidance
- 15. Facilitating the lessons
- 16. Ground rules
- 18. Constructive discussions
- 19. Support networks



# BE INTERNET CITIZENS PROGRAMME

## OVERVIEW

We aim to build a safe and inspiring online space where young people are empowered to learn, discover, share, create, express themselves and experience a sense of belonging. While most young people today have grown up as 'digital natives', with technology involved in most aspects of their daily lives, they may still lack the critical thinking and media literacy skills that are key to practising positive digital citizenship.

The Be Internet Citizens programme is a collaboration between Google, YouTube and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), teaching young people the key knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours they need to thrive in the online world.

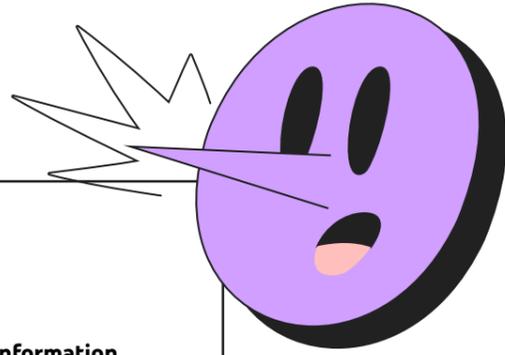
The lessons have been designed for children living in the UK aged 13 years old and over.

# OBJECTIVES

This Unit of Work comprises five lessons, each covering a key area of digital citizenship.

## LESSON 1

Looks at concepts of **dis- and misinformation** online, the difference between them, how inaccurate information can cause real harm, and what internet users can do to respond effectively.



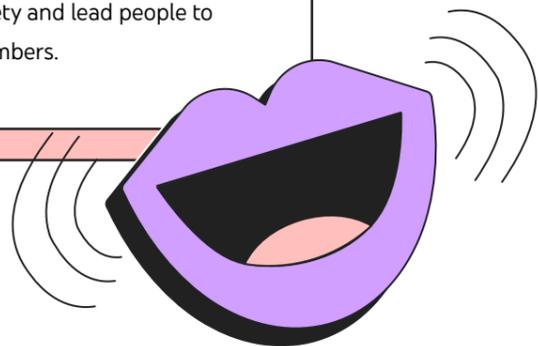
## LESSON 2

Explores **biased writing**, particularly forms encountered in traditional and social media, and how it can shape people's opinions and perception of events. The lesson also explores the filter bubble phenomenon, including the trade-offs of a 'personalised web' and how the content we are served online can narrow our understanding of the world.



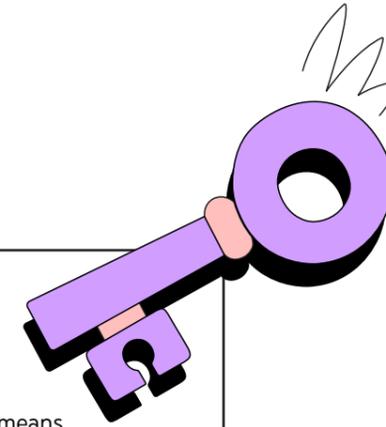
## LESSON 3

Examines how **personal biases**, both conscious and unconscious, can lead us to stereotype others, and the potential negative consequences for individuals and society. As part of this discussion, the lesson covers how divisive 'us vs them' thinking can polarise society and lead people to communicate in echo chambers.



## LESSON 4

Explores what **freedom of speech** means according to UK law, the responsibilities associated with it, and how to respond to abuse, bullying or hate speech online.

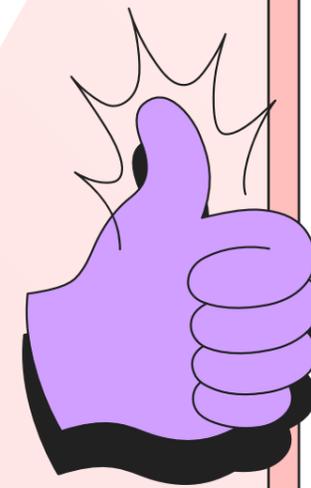


## LESSON 5

Helps students to demonstrate their understanding of digital citizenship and **put their skills into practice** in a creative and collaborative way.

Throughout this unit, students will enhance their awareness and understanding of online challenges faced in everyday life. In doing so, we hope they can benefit from all the amazing things the internet has to offer, while avoiding major pitfalls and staying an informed and respectful citizen online. By the end of these lessons, students will be able to:

- Use critical thinking skills to assess the credibility and trustworthiness of online content.
- Recognise the impact of bias in how opinions and worldviews are developed, and interrogate the reasons behind their own reactions to online content.
- Analyse some of the factors that drive divisions between groups on- and offline, and how these can be challenged.
- Explain how to exercise free speech responsibly online, and use a range of methods to respond effectively to hate and abuse.



# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

To most effectively build student's digital citizenship knowledge and skills, we recommend delivering themes 1-3, and the lessons within them, in the order they are presented here. The creative and collaborative final session is an extension which we encourage teachers to deliver where time and resources permit.

## Please note the following:

- Throughout the lesson activity plans, teachers will be referred to as T, and students as S.
- All lesson timings are recommendations based upon the estimated time needed to deliver them. You are encouraged to extend the lessons as long as necessary, depending on the depth of your discussions and level of student engagement.
- Additional activities, talking points and debate motions have been included to support these extended learning opportunities.

## ▶ EVERY LESSON PLAN CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING:



### INTRODUCTION

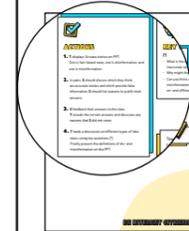
Provides an overview of the lesson activity, the learning objectives and outcomes, and explanations of any key concepts.



### FURTHER INFORMATION

A table with links to further reading on key concepts, resources that can provide further learning opportunities beyond this curriculum, and digital tools (e.g. browser plug-ins) to support constructive internet usage. These are traffic-lit to indicate which age groups they are suitable for.

## LESSON ACTIVITIES PLAN



### ACTIONS

A breakdown of the step-by-step actions to support delivery of the starter, main and summary activities, including references to the relevant PowerPoint (PPT) slides.



### KEY QUESTIONS

A series of key questions that accompany the discussion component of each activity. Every discussion comes with its own set of questions, clearly indicated by symbols (\*), (\*\*), and (\*\*\*)



### TEACHER GUIDANCE

Support in facilitating conversations with students on sensitive and often complex topics, and in ensuring key learning points are covered in each activity. These sections also provide additional information on the resources you will need to deliver the activities.



### HANDOUTS

Additional resources to supplement activities can be found at the end of each lesson plan. It is recommended that these are printed, photocopied and distributed to students to aid lesson delivery.



### PRESENTATION SLIDES

These have been designed to support the delivery of all lessons. PPT slides display information that both you and the students will require to understand key concepts, and which clearly explain how each activity should run.





## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to note that some of the activities in this unit will require you to source images and video clips online. In each instance we have described recommended content that can be easily found through an online search, and should achieve the learning objectives safely. We recommend that you use real and relevant images or video clips, in addition to names of people or groups that students can readily recognise and identify with. In cases where the names of individuals or organisations have been referenced, please note that this does not equal an endorsement from Google or YouTube; they have been included as indicative examples by ISD.

When choosing images and video clips we strongly recommend material that balances the risk of undue shock, distress or offence caused to students, as this is likely to prevent the desired learning and may be harmful to those present.

Finally, please note that all headlines used throughout the unit have been fabricated to help students achieve the learning objectives and demonstrate key concepts.

# LINKS TO UK CURRICULUM

## PSHE ASSOCIATION PROGRAMME OF STUDY (PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION)

Each of the three core themes in the PSHE Association Programme of Study contains suggested learning opportunities, providing the context through which students can develop essential knowledge, skills and behaviours. These should be used flexibly according to students' development, readiness and needs, and take account of prior experience and understanding. The Be Internet Citizens unit of work contributes to the following learning opportunities from the relevant core themes at Key Stage 3 (KS3) and Key Stage 4 (KS4).

### REFERENCES TO THE PROGRAMME OF STUDY 2020

#### KS3:

- H3. The impact that media and social media can have on how people think about themselves and express themselves, including regarding body image, physical and mental health
- H4. Simple strategies to help build resilience to negative opinions, judgements and comments.
- H30. How to identify risk and manage personal safety in increasingly independent situations, including online.
- R40. About the unacceptability of prejudice-based language and behaviour, offline and online, including sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, racism, ableism and faith-based prejudice.
- R41. The need to promote inclusion and challenge discrimination, and how to do so safely, including online.
- R43. The role peers can play in supporting one another to resist pressure and influence, challenge harmful social norms and access appropriate support.
- L22. The benefits and positive use of social media, including how it can offer opportunities to engage with a wide variety of views on different issues.

- L23. To recognise the importance of seeking a variety of perspectives on issues and ways of assessing the evidence which supports those views.
- L27. To respond appropriately when things go wrong online, including confidently accessing support, reporting to authorities and platforms.

#### KS4:

- H22. Ways to identify risk and manage personal safety in new social settings, workplaces and environments, including online.
- R5. The legal rights, responsibilities and protections provided by the Equality Act 2010.
- R9. To recognise, clarify and if necessary challenge their own values and understand how their values influence their decisions, goals and behaviours.
- R34. Strategies to challenge all forms of prejudice and discrimination.
- R36. Skills to support younger peers when in positions of influence.
- L22. That there are positive and safe ways to create and share content online and the opportunities this offers.
- L24. That social media may disproportionately feature exaggerated or inaccurate information about situations, or extreme viewpoints; to recognise why and how this may influence opinions and perceptions of people and events.
- L26. How data may be used with the aim of influencing decisions, including targeted advertising and other forms of personalisation online; strategies to manage this.
- L27. Strategies to critically assess bias, reliability and accuracy in digital content.

# LINKS TO UK CURRICULUM

## DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION'S RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) AND HEALTH EDUCATION GUIDANCE

### Respectful relationships:

- How stereotypes, in particular stereotypes based on sex, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, can cause damage (e.g. how they might normalise non-consensual behaviour or encourage prejudice).
- The legal rights and responsibilities regarding equality (particularly with reference to the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010) and that everyone is unique and equal.

### Online and media:

- Their rights, responsibilities and opportunities online, including that the same expectations of behaviour apply in all contexts, including online.
- What to do and where to get support to report material or manage issues online.
- How information and data is generated, collected, shared and used online.

### Internet safety and harms:

- How to identify harmful behaviours online (including bullying, abuse or harassment) and how to report or find support if they have been affected by those behaviours.

# FACILITATING THE LESSONS

This section guides how best to deliver the lessons and how to handle sensitive topics.

The unit of work is based on several basic principles designed to make the lessons engaging, enjoyable and memorable.

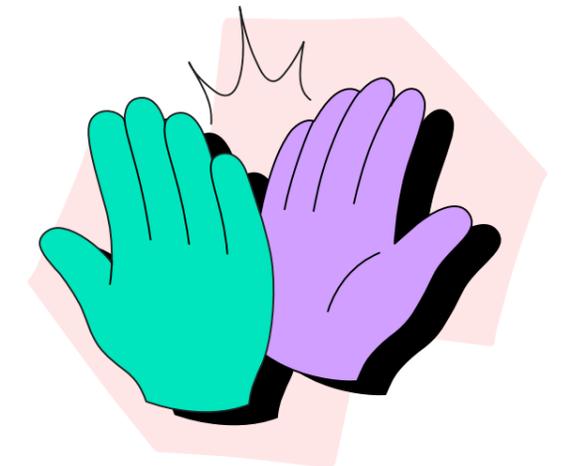


## DISCUSSION-BASED

The content of these lessons is not designed to be delivered in a lecture format, but through lively discussions that accompany each activity. All activities come with a series of prompting questions which can be explored by the group. Students must be allowed to safely debate, understand and challenge assumptions about their own and others' values and behaviours.

## INTERACTIVE & INCLUSIVE

Involving all students in the lesson, including those who might be reluctant to participate, is vital to creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere. Given the potentially sensitive nature of topics covered, the lessons have been designed to adapt to diverse learning styles and to ensure that students of any ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or gender can engage with and benefit from the content, without concerns about stereotyping or discrimination.



## A RESPECTFUL, SAFE SPACE

By discussing and agreeing ground rules beforehand, you can create a respectful space in which to conduct the lessons. A clear Code of Conduct can help students to feel safe when expressing their ideas while still showing respect for others, and may help you challenge unacceptable behaviours or attitudes. This is particularly important when covering more controversial and emotive issues.

You could display the ground rules visually and revisit them whenever necessary throughout the lessons.

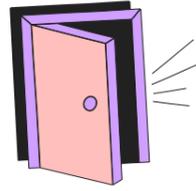
# GROUND RULES

You may want to include the following in discussion with your group:



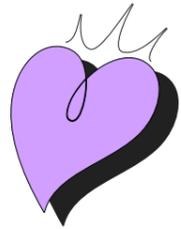
## OPENNESS

We will be open and honest, but will not directly discuss our own or others' personal/private lives. We will discuss general situations as examples, but will not use names or descriptions which could identify anyone.



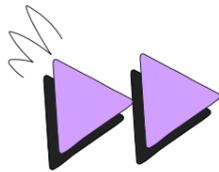
## KEEP THE CONVERSATION IN THE ROOM

We feel safe discussing issues and know that our educator will not repeat what is said in the room unless they are concerned we are at risk; in which case they will follow the school's safeguarding policy.



## NON-JUDGMENTAL APPROACH

It is fine for us to disagree with another person's point of view, but we will not judge, make fun of or dismiss anyone from the discussion. We can 'challenge the opinion, not the person'.



## RIGHT TO PASS

Taking part is important. However, we have the right to pass on answering a question or participating in an activity, and we will not put anyone on the spot.



## MAKE NO ASSUMPTIONS

We will not make assumptions about people's values, attitudes, behaviours, life experiences or feelings.



## LISTEN TO OTHERS

We will listen to other people's point of view respectfully and can expect the same in return. Even when we disagree, it is important to let people articulate their ideas fully so we can respond.



## USING LANGUAGE

We will use the correct terms for topics under discussion rather than slang terms which might be offensive. If we are not sure what the correct term is, we will ask our teacher.



## ASKING QUESTIONS

We are encouraged to ask questions, but never do so to deliberately embarrass anyone. Teachers may encourage students to raise questions by providing an anonymous 'Ask Me Anything' box, if they feel less comfortable speaking in front of the class.



## SEEKING HELP AND ADVICE

If we need further help or advice, we know how and where to seek it confidentially, both in the school and wider community. We will encourage friends to seek help if we think they need it.

# CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS

Be Internet Citizens works most effectively when students feel free to express their opinions, even when these may be controversial or not yet fully formed.

Because of the sensitive subject matter, many difficult conversations might arise in the course of these lessons.

If a student makes a comment that contravenes the established ground rules and/or the school's behaviour policy, for example an explicitly and purposefully racist statement, then teachers must respond accordingly. On the other hand, if comments are judged to be acceptable or simply show a gap in the student's knowledge, for example if they ask why a particular statement is discriminatory, then this can be treated as an opportunity for learning and you are encouraged to follow up with a question.

For example, you might ask:

- **Why might someone be offended by this?**
- **Do you think you can judge a group as a whole rather than as individuals?**
- **How would you feel in that situation?**

Questions such as these can help to build a constructive, judgement-free conversation from the student's comment. If the conversation which arises is not constructive after challenging their statement, you can choose to move the discussion on. While changing a young person's attitude entirely in the course of a one-hour lesson is unlikely, there is still an opportunity to both question and perhaps redirect their thinking, something which may lead them to reflect on their attitudes and behaviours over time.

However, we discourage disclosures of a personal nature in a public setting. Instead, you can encourage students to ask for help by seeking out an appropriate adult they trust such as a parent or form tutor, or refer them to the named pastoral lead, designated safeguarding lead or equivalent role in your school. Make sure that any pastoral support offered to students is framed within the reference of your school's specific Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.



# SUPPORT NETWORKS

We also recommend that you finish each lesson with the final presentation slide, which provides students with the following national and regional organisations and makes them aware of their wider support networks.

**childline**

ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME

## Childline

Offers advice to young people under 19 on a range of issues including online safety.

[childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk)



## The Mix

A multi-channel service offering support to people under 25, enabling them to make informed choices about their wellbeing.

[themix.org.uk](http://themix.org.uk)



## UK Safer Internet Centre

A partnership of leading online safety expert organisations, who produce resources and run a helpline for young people.

[saferinternet.org.uk](http://saferinternet.org.uk)



## Relate

The UK's largest provider of support in helping people strengthen their relationships.

[relate.org.uk](http://relate.org.uk) (**help for children and young people section**).



## Samaritans

Provides emotional support to those who are struggling to cope and reaches out to high-risk groups.

[samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org) (**England, Scotland, Wales**).

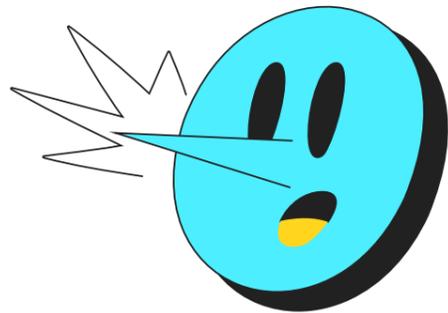


## Thinkuknow

Seeks to empower young people, offering them advice and a reporting service.

[thinkuknow.co.uk](http://thinkuknow.co.uk)

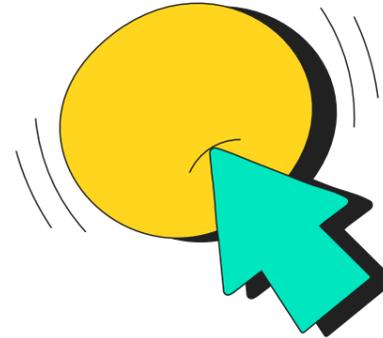
# DEFINITION CARDS



## DISINFORMATION

Disinformation refers to any content that has been deliberately created to deceive people or give them an inaccurate understanding of an issue. It is often presented as being fact-based, but in reality is intentionally false.

# DEFINITION CARDS



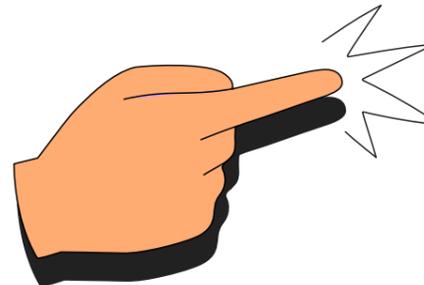
## FILTER BUBBLES

Filter bubbles occur when users are suggested content based on previous internet habits and interactions. Over time they can isolate users from any viewpoints or interests different to their own. Long-term, this can limit people's understanding of complex topics or events and reduce empathy and dialogue between different groups.



## MISINFORMATION

Misinformation refers to the accidental sharing of false information. While there is no intention to harm, the negative consequences can be just as powerful. It can mislead friends and colleagues, increase confusion around a topic, create divisions between groups or communities, and in extreme cases put people in danger.



## STEREOTYPING

Stereotyping occurs when we categorise or make assumptions about people based on basic characteristics, for example their age, gender identity, skin colour, physical ability, sexuality, religion or even location. A stereotype presumes that everyone who shares these characteristics is the same, or that superficial aspects about a person can reveal their deeper likes, abilities, preferences and habits.



## BIASED WRITING

Biased writing occurs when an author shows favouritism or prejudice towards a particular opinion instead of being fair and balanced. It is often used to drive people towards certain viewpoints or actions, and can appeal to the reader's emotions rather than encouraging them to think critically.



## US VS THEM

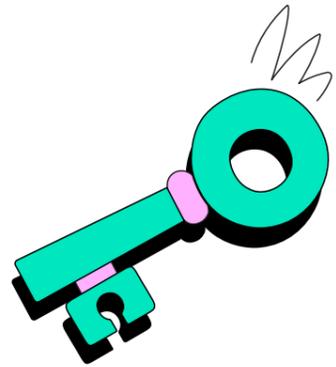
An 'us vs them' mentality divides the world into negatively viewed or stereotyped out-groups (them), and positively viewed or victim in-groups (us). Divisions can be based on a wide range of characteristics such as race, religion, gender, class, nationality, and political views. It can even relate to culture, for example which sports team a person supports or what music they listen to.

# DEFINITION CARDS



## ECHO CHAMBER

Echo chambers are social spaces in which ideas, opinions and beliefs are reinforced by repetition within a closed group.



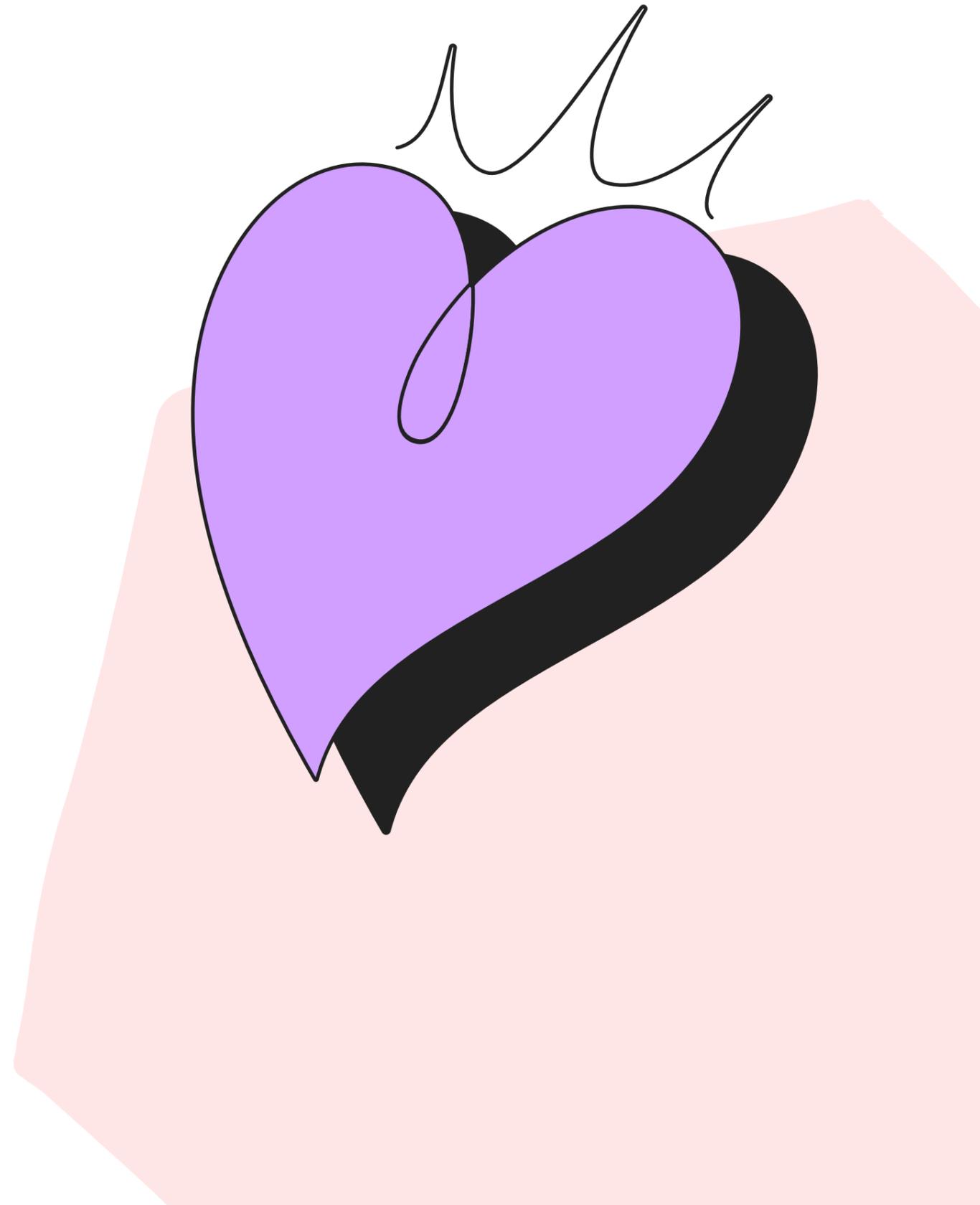
## FREE SPEECH

Free speech is the right to hold opinions, as well as to receive and share information and ideas freely, without fear of retaliation or censorship by the government.



## HATE SPEECH

Hate speech attacks a person or group based on their race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or physical and mental abilities. These are sometimes referred to as 'protected characteristics', i.e. things about an individual which cannot be changed, are central to their identity or make a person who they are. As such, abusing someone or discriminating against them because of these factors is prejudiced and unfair.



# LESSON 1

# FACT VS FICTION



# LESSON 1

## FACT VS FICTION

### LESSON PLAN

 Please note, all suggested activity timings can be adapted at your discretion, based on the needs of the class.

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students should develop a good understanding of the different forms of so-called 'fake news', and learn the useful terms that can be used to describe this type of online content. Students will understand the difference between deliberate disinformation and unintentional misinformation,

examine different types of each, and recognise the potential consequences both can have on individuals and society. Students will consider ways in which they can respond effectively to the spread of dis- and misinformation online, making full use of their critical-thinking skills and creativity.



#### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- To understand what the terms disinformation and misinformation mean, the consequences they have on people and how to slow their spread online.



#### HANDOUTS

- Handout 1: Definition cards for disinformation and misinformation.
- Handout 2

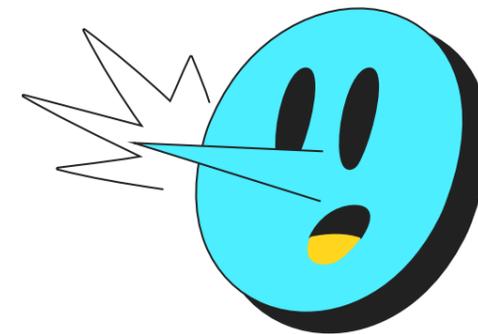


#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students can identify common traits of dis/misinformation (e.g. website format, URLs, images and citations).
2. Students can explain potential motives for posting inaccurate information online and describe how it impacts individuals and society.
3. Students can list effective responses to dis/misinformation when encountered online (e.g. fact-checking and reporting).

## ▶ KEY CONCEPTS

# DISINFORMATION



#### DEFINITION

Disinformation refers to any information that has been **deliberately created to deceive people or give them an inaccurate understanding of an issue.**

It is often presented as being fact-based, but in reality is intentionally false.

#### TEACHER EXPLANATION

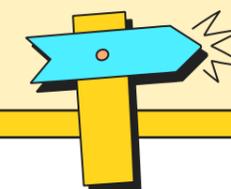
People create disinformation for many reasons, for example:

- **Financial incentives:** with the hope of earning advertising revenue which sensationalist stories often generate. Others may use disinformation to scam people online by requesting payment in exchange for a non-existent product or service.
- **Political goals:** a desire to influence opinion for or against a group in society, political party or candidate. Disinformation can be a powerful tool used to spread hate online, which then translates into social divisions or even violence offline.
- **Personal reasons:** a desire to spread mischief (e.g. trolling), make a satirical joke or promote a conspiracy theory.

Disinformation is often designed to seem legitimate, adopting the look of mainstream news sources. It might appear in the form of social media posts or memes (an image, usually humorous, that is adapted and spread rapidly by internet users), but can also be fronted through website pages or other so-called 'official' sources. A single piece of disinformation can be shared in multiple formats or from different accounts – this makes it even harder to differentiate truthful stories from fake ones, let alone detect and moderate harmful content.

Once disinformation has been published online, people generally engage with it through reactions (e.g. likes), commenting or sharing, including across platforms. Even if responses are trying to disprove or fact-check the original post, the engagement still increases visibility for that content. This means that more people are likely to see the false information until gradually it has gained mass exposure and interest, either from the general public or specific communities. Such a process is sometimes called the '[Trumpet of Amplification](#)' or 'giving oxygen' to disinformation, as content which starts on the fringes gains visibility through social media and (in some cases) is then reported on by mainstream outlets. In addition, individuals who have engaged are likely to be served content from the same or similar publishers in the future, which may also be unreliable – this is due to the technologies (e.g. algorithms) that run social media sites, and recommend content based on your previous habits or interactions (to be explored in the next session).

You can refer to the teacher guidance sections throughout this lesson plan for additional information on disinformation.



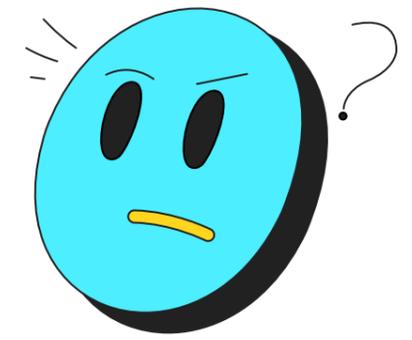
## TEACHER EXPLANATION (CONT.)

Although disinformation can be difficult to spot, there are various features which may indicate a news story is fake:

- **A suspicious URL** with an unusual ending (e.g. biz.org).
- **Highly emotional or exaggerated language** (e.g. clickbait headlines): “You won’t believe what happens when man and bear get into a wrestling match!”
- **A less well-known, or unknown, publication name and logo.** (N.b. There are many valid sources of news and information that are lesser known, particularly among younger audiences. Where a student encounters these publications, they should take extra care to establish the credibility of contributing journalists, and to fact-check content they read by cross-referencing it with more established outlets).
- **Blurred or altered logos** of well-known news organisations (e.g. the BBC).
- **Edited photos or images.** Spreaders of false information may use digital tools to manipulate or edit images that support their ‘story’. If content seems suspicious, look closely at the images to see if there are signs of doctored (e.g. strange shadows or jagged edges around a figure). Alternatively, real images from a former credible story may be repurposed for this new, inaccurate story. This can easily be checked using the [‘Reverse Image Search’](#) function on Google, which will show where that image has appeared previously on the internet (i.e. if it really relates to this story/ event, or has been falsely attributed).
- **Statistics or images with no stated source,** citation or footnote.

- **Articles with no stated author** or editorial team.
  - **Websites where every story seems to induce outrage** or expose a ‘scandal’.
  - **Websites with suspicious or inappropriate advertising** (e.g. for firearms).
  - **Links to other unlikely sounding stories,** including clickbait or sponsored content.
  - **Frequent spelling and grammatical errors,** which would normally be spotted by an editorial team
- Individuals can help reduce the spread and impact of disinformation by paying attention to what they consume and their own responses to content. For example:
- Where possible, flag suspicious content to the platform administrator.
  - If the content is explicitly violent or threatening, report it to the police, a victim helpline or trusted adult (e.g. teacher, parent).
  - Block the person or group publishing disinformation.
  - Ignore the story, ‘downrank’ it or remove it from your newsfeed.
  - Avoid sharing the disinformation, even if you are doing so in outrage or to alert others. If you did want to raise awareness, you could screenshot and share the post rather than the actual link, as the latter often increases the publisher’s ad revenue.
  - Comment on the fake story to alert others of its inaccuracy.
  - Share a link to a news story on the same topic from a credible publication.

## ▶ KEY CONCEPTS MISINFORMATION



### DEFINITION

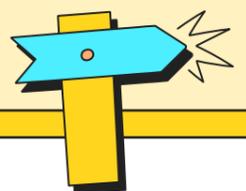
Misinformation refers to the **accidental sharing of false information.** While there is no intention to harm, the negative consequences can be just as powerful. It can mislead friends and colleagues, increase confusion around a topic, create divisions between groups or communities, and in extreme cases put people in danger.

### TEACHER EXPLANATION

Although most people share information with the best of intentions, if that content is false we are inadvertently spreading misinformation. This can have similar impacts on individuals and communities as people who deliberately share disinformation. For example, healthcare advice that hopes to improve people’s quality of life can cause serious harm if it is not based on factual medical information or scientific evidence. Given how quickly information can spread across the internet, this inaccurate advice may cause damage on a large scale in a short space of time. Similarly, if an individual is misled by harmful disinformation online, such as a conspiracy theory, they may share it with their own online communities thinking it is valuable or factual information.

We live in an age of online influencers and digital content creators, many of whom have large subscriber or fanbases that accept what they say as fact. Given the extensive reach their messaging has, it is all the more important these individuals exercise good judgement and responsibility when posting online – especially if they are discussing an issue on which they are not experts. There have been incidents of influencers unwittingly spreading conspiracy theories to their audiences of millions of users. It is therefore essential that all users demonstrate critical thinking skills when browsing online. This includes asking ourselves questions such as:

- How do I know this information is based in fact?
- What is the source of the information shared?
- Am I more likely to believe this person because I like them, have common interests or know them personally?  
Is this a good reason not to check the facts myself?



You can refer to the teacher guidance sections throughout this lesson plan for additional information on misinformation.

# LESSON ACTIVITIES PLAN

## ▶ STARTER ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

- T displays 3x news stories on PPT.** One is fact-based news, one is disinformation, and one is misinformation.
- In pairs, S should discuss which they think are accurate stories and which provide false information.** S should list reasons to justify their answers.
- S feedback their answers to the class.**  
T reveals the correct answers and discusses any reasons that S did not cover.
- T leads a discussion on different types of fake news, using key questions (\*).** Finally, present the definitions of dis- and misinformation on the PPT.



### KEY QUESTIONS

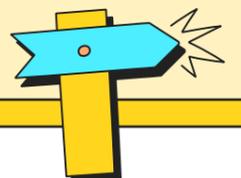
- (\*)
- What is the difference between the two types of inaccurate news stories here?
  - Why might the term fake news be unhelpful?
  - Can you think of examples of dis- and misinformation you have seen, both on- and offline?

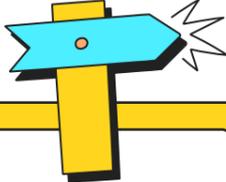
## FURTHER INFORMATION ON DIS- AND MISINFORMATION:

RESOURCE	SUMMARY	AGE-GROUP SUITABILITY
<a href="#">BBC Bitesize Fact or Fake</a>	A range of articles, lesson plans and standalone activities on fake news.	All ages
<a href="#">BBC Young Reporter</a>	An initiative providing young people with the skills to create and understand media today.	All ages
<a href="#">Poynter's MediaWise Project</a>	US-based digital literacy project with resources focused on navigating online information in a robust, critical way.	All ages
<a href="#">Full Fact</a>	Independent fact-checking organisation, establishing and publishing facts on topical issues.	All ages
<a href="#">PC Mag UK: 'How to Spot Fake News Online'</a>	List of plug-ins to help internet users establish media bias on webpages and identify fake news.	All ages
<a href="#">First Draft</a>	Toolkits, guides, plug-ins and research on dis- and misinformation.	A resource for teachers
<a href="#">Fake News: A True Story</a>	Brief clip taken from a BBC documentary, which demonstrates the way in which deepfake videos can be produced.	A resource for teachers. Please note there is a single swear word used from 1:45, and so this part should not be shown to students.

Please note, the resources in the above table have not been quality assured by the PSHE Association.

Teacher guidance on the following page.





## TEACHER GUIDANCE

This introduction allows you to assess students' understanding of so-called fake news online, as well as testing their critical thinking skills straight away.

While students will likely have heard of fake news, this activity and the lesson generally should highlight the limitations of the term. Fake news is too often used as a catch-all term to describe issues online, but loses important nuance on the motivation (innocent or deliberate) behind the spread of false information. News doesn't need to be entirely fake to cause harm; it can also skew facts to promote a specific response, or selectively choose information to bias people's opinion. Fake news also reduces our individual responsibility to be careful online, implying the entire problem stems from a small group of shadowy figures and bad people. In addition, fake news is increasingly common in describing factual information that someone merely doesn't like or disagrees with, making it less useful as a term for media and digital literacy.

Instead, students should become familiar with the terms disinformation and misinformation, and understand the distinction between the two.

Teachers can find additional examples of disinformation from websites including [Full Fact](#), [BBC Reality Check](#), [FactCheckNI](#), [The Ferret](#) and [Snopes](#).

### Resources:

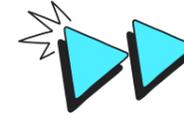
Disinformation – [Article falsely claiming that major celebrities have died in a car crash](#)

Misinformation – Influencer promoting medicinal misinformation: “Celery Juice: The Most Powerful Medicine of our Time, Healing Millions Worldwide”.

This misinformation was reported on [here](#).

Fact-based – [BBC article on major celebrity appearing on the rich list](#).

## ▶ MAIN ACTIVITY (20–30 MINS)



## ACTIONS

### 1. Split the class into four groups and give each one a case study of information shared online.

These include examples of the following:

- Deepfake video (S will need to access a computer)
- Conspiracy theory (moon landing, flat earth)
- Clickbait
- Misinformation

### 2. Each group analyses their case study.

They should consider the following questions:

- Do you think this content is presenting trustworthy information?
- If false, what has helped you to identify it as such?

### 3. S present their conclusions about each case study to the class. T should guide the discussion, where necessary, with key questions (\*). Other groups should contribute their ideas and comments for each case study.

### 4. T reveals the different forms of false information to S. S are encouraged to offer examples of where they have seen these online before. S write definitions of each.

### 5. As a class, compile a list of key indicators of false information online. S will have established some of these during the previous activity, but T can use guidance section to add any that are missing.

### 6. T asks S to re-examine their case studies and consider the key questions (\*\*). S work through these questions in the same groups as before.

### 7. S feed back to the rest of the class. T should guide discussion using information in the Guidance and Teacher Explanation sections.



## KEY QUESTIONS

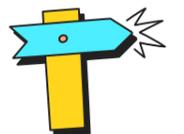
### (\*)

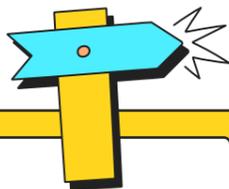
- Who is the source of this information?
- Have you heard of them before?
- What makes you suspicious about whether to trust this content?
- What details do you notice about the appearance of this content?
- Should this content be shared? Why/why not?

### (\*\*)

- Why do you think someone produced this content?
- What effect did they want to have on their audience?
- How does it attempt to produce this effect on its audience?
- Why might someone feel compelled to share this?
- What consequences might this have on people if it was widely shared?
- Extension: what steps might you take to counter the spread of this information if you discovered it online, or saw a friend/relative sharing it?

Teacher guidance on the following page.





## TEACHER GUIDANCE

This activity shows students a range of disinformation and misinformation examples, helping them recognise that false information can come in various forms online. These include:

**Deepfake:** computer-generated videos of real people doing or saying things that never happened in reality. These can be used for comedic purposes or to make someone look silly, but can also spread fear or erode trust towards people (especially public figures and celebrities). More information can be found [here](#) and some good examples of deepfake videos are available [here](#) (search: Bill Posters haters) and [here](#) (search: Future Advocacy deepfakes). Deepfakes can be produced in a variety of ways. These examples show real-life footage in which the image has been manipulated to move the subject's mouth, while the audio has been dubbed by professional voice actors. Other videos – such as the BBC example in the 'Further Information' section – use software to learn someone's facial structure and movements, and superimpose that over someone else who has been filmed (similar to motion capture in cinema).

**Conspiracy Theories:** invented explanations for events that are wrongly linked to groups or individuals, often those in power (e.g. governments, major companies, wealthy individuals) or those who are already marginalised (e.g. ethnic and religious minorities, refugees and migrants). Conspiracy theories can be wilfully used to stir up abuse and violence towards others. A recent example is the conspiracy around 5G mobile networks contributing to the spread of COVID-19, which prompted small groups of people to vandalise 5G pylons, attack and abuse telecoms workers, and scapegoat Asian communities. The theory was quickly [debunked by scientists](#), but the story has already spread and gained followings across the globe.

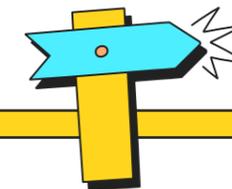
An alternative conspiracy theory you could highlight is that proposed by 'Flat Earthers', who reject any evidence that proves the earth is round and deeply mistrust institutions that provide this evidence. Details of the movement can be found [here](#).

**Clickbait:** where a publisher posts an intentionally exaggerated or misleading headline, social media post or image, prompting people to click through to their webpage. The more people that view their page, the more money the publisher can make through adverts posted on the site, and the more social media algorithms will promote their content to others (e.g. on newsfeeds). Headlines will often entice people with phrases such as "You won't believe what." or "See what happens when...", followed by something outrageous or unbelievable. Clickbait can be harmless (e.g. to promote showbiz gossip) but also causes people to lose trust in the quality of information online until they are unsure what to believe. Some good examples can be found [here](#).

**Differentiation:** students with lower literacy levels may benefit from being asked to analyse more visual examples, such as the deepfake video.

To ensure you use relevant examples of disinformation and stay aware of trends online, we suggest following the work of journalists including:

- Brandy Zadrozny (NBC News)
- Jane Lytvynenko (Buzzfeed)
- Kevin Roose (New York Times)
- Marianna Spring (BBC)
- Mark Scott (Politico)
- Rowland Manthorpe (Wired UK and Sky News)
- Shayan Sardarizadeh (BBC)



## TEACHER GUIDANCE (CONT.)

The risk with mis- and disinformation is that content will be widely shared and believed before either the platform they are published on, or independent fact-checkers, can demonstrate they are false. Sometimes dis- and misinformation will look no different to news from credible sources, meaning it is easily believed and mistaken as factual. In other examples, where highly emotive or sensationalist language is used, people may forget to think critically about the content of information, believing what they read purely because it provokes an emotional response or confirms their existing opinions about a person/situation/society.

A list of indicators to help identify whether a news story is fake should include:

- A suspicious URL with an unusual ending, e.g. biz.org
- Highly emotional or exaggerated language making unrealistic claims
- No clear, reliable source of the information being commented on (e.g. citations, footnotes)
- A less well-known company name and logo
- Presents breaking 'news' that has not been reported by other credible outlets
- Edited/misattributed photos or images
- Links to other unlikely sounding stories
- Frequent spelling and punctuation errors.

Students should be encouraged to think critically about the information they see online. **This does not mean being sceptical about all information** but rather pausing to consider whether something is reliable, interrogating their own response, and doing more research if in any doubt. This is sometimes referred to as 'friction', i.e. slowing down the time between a user viewing content and reacting – if you can increase friction, you leave more space to deliberate, question and prevent those gut responses that cause us to make mistakes.

Students can take the following steps to verify information online:

- Fact-check information by seeing what well-established, credible reporters say about the story. Good sites include [fullfact.org](#), [snopes.com](#), [BBC Reality Check](#) and [PolitiFact](#).
- Research the author or the information source to see if they have shared false information in the past.
- Use the '[reverse image search function](#)' to verify if images are trustworthy or have been falsely linked to the story in question.
- Check the dates of content – often old articles/images resurface, and are circulated falsely in relation to current events.
- Make sure it's not satire! Many sites are consciously mocking the news or 'public scandals', but people [mistake them as fact](#).

## ▶ PLENARY (10 MINUTES)

**1. Set S the following brief:** list three pieces of advice you would give to a friend or family member to help them tackle false information online.

**2. T takes feedback from S and captures their responses for use in Lesson 2.**

**3. If there is time, S should complete the first questions in their reflective journal (see Handout 1).**

### TEACHER GUIDANCE

The end of the session provides students with the opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt about dis- and misinformation, why it exists, and what they can do to reduce its negative impact on individuals and society. Some preventative actions might include:

- Blocking the person or group publishing the false information
- Using specific platform features to flag content as false
- Ignoring the story or removing it from your newsfeed

- Commenting on the story to alert others that it is false
- Sharing a link to a real news story on the same topic
- Educating others about mis- and disinformation.

**Differentiation:** some students may benefit from being given the above actions and having to note why they agree with them.

### ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

• **Current affairs round-up:** students could choose a topical news item, summarise how it is being reported by credible journalists, then highlight dis- and misinformation that has been spread on the same issue. The whole class could then discuss the potential consequences of the story being inaccurately reported.

• **Class debates on the following motions:**

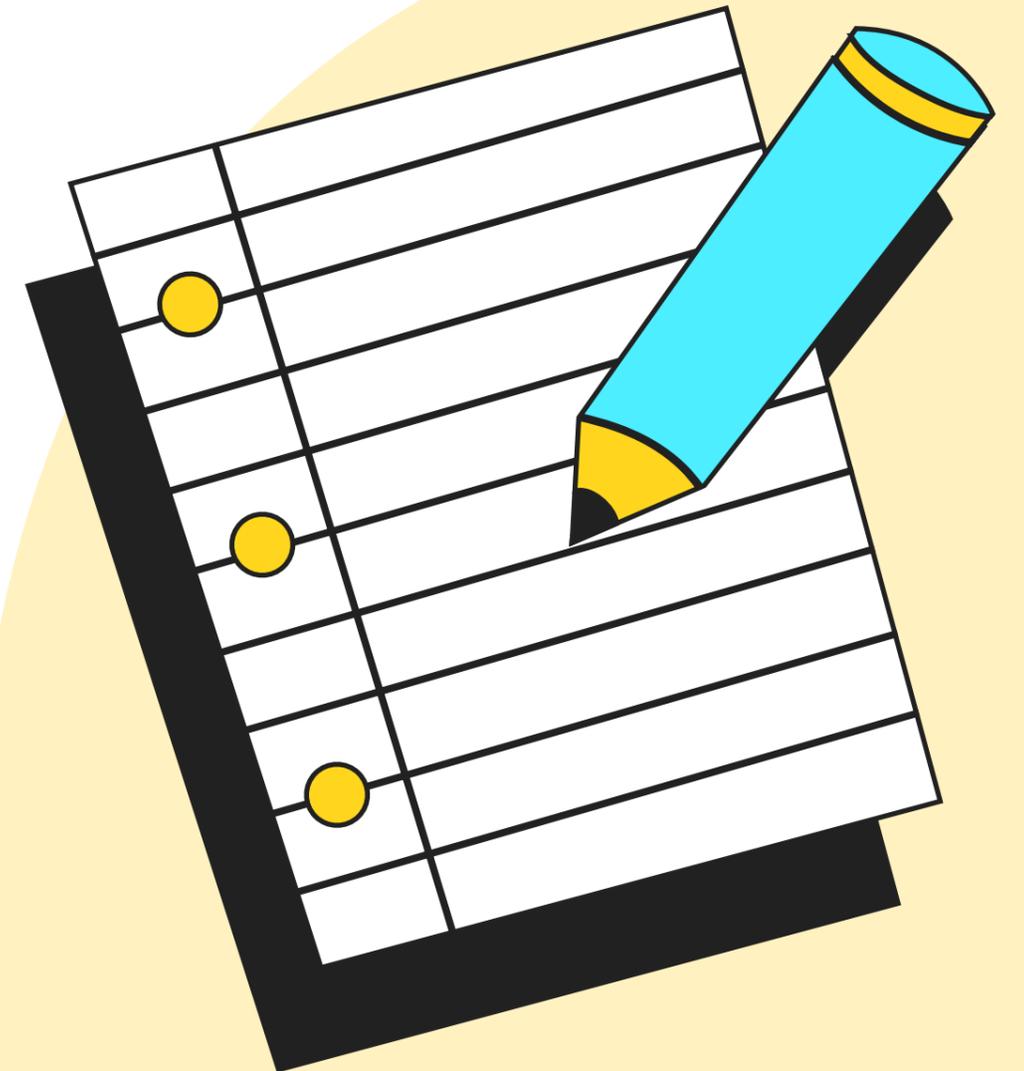
- *“False information should always be removed from social media regardless of the topic.”*
- *“People should be punished for sharing false information, even if by accident.”*
- *“People have a duty to fact-check information they see online before sharing it.”*
- *“You shouldn’t trust any news you find on social media.”*

# HANDOUTS

The following pages contain the supporting handouts to be photocopied and distributed to students.

**Handout 1** – Definition cards for disinformation and misinformation

**Handout 2** – A reflective journal posing questions for students to answer across all lessons



## ▶ HANDOUT 2

# BE INTERNET CITIZENS: REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Following the relevant activity, take some time to reflect on the questions below. These are for your personal development as a digital citizen and do not need to be shared with others unless you are comfortable doing so.

## LESSON 1

What is your main take-away from this lesson about the dangers of dis/misinformation? Why do you think it is important to stop it from spreading online?

## LESSON 2

Consider your own experiences using the internet, and social media in particular: where have you seen filter bubbles personalising the content you see? How do you feel about this kind of personalised web?

## LESSON 3

How might people stereotype you and why would this be inaccurate? What adjectives do you wish they would use instead?

How has this lesson changed how you feel about yours and others' identity?

## ▶ HANDOUT 2

# BE INTERNET CITIZENS: REFLECTIVE JOURNAL (CONT.)

## LESSON 4

Consider whether you have ever posted something hurtful online. Without going into details of the original post, how would you act differently if presented with this situation again?

Consider a time when someone else posted hurtful or offensive content online (e.g. a close friend, a relative, an influencer, a stranger in a comment thread). How might you have engaged this person to constructively resolve the situation or take other action? Equally, how might you support the victim of an attack online?

## LESSON 2

# THREE SIDES TO EVERY STORY



## LESSON 2

# THREE SIDES TO EVERY STORY

## LESSON PLAN



Please note, all suggested activity timings can be adapted at your discretion, based on the needs of the class.

### OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will examine the idea of biased writing and reflect on where they encounter it in their daily lives. They will understand how biased writing in the media differs from both fact-based reporting and disinformation, while acknowledging it can have similar consequences to the latter. Students will examine the features of biased writing, including different types of bias (e.g. bias by omission, bias by selection of sources) and the use of sensationalist language to provoke

an emotional response from readers. Students will consider how this type of content gains traction online, and how that contributes to social media users being funnelled similar content by the platforms they inhabit. This 'filter bubble' phenomenon will also be explored, encouraging students to think about their 'information ecosystem' online and the potential impacts (both positive and negative).



### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- To learn about different forms of biased writing, and how online filter bubbles can shape our own biases and opinions.



### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students can explain what biased writing is and why writers might employ bias in their work.
2. Students can analyse the effects of media bias on individuals and society.
3. Students can define what a filter bubble is and explain its impact on individuals/society.
4. Students can explain the benefits of getting information from diverse sources.



### HANDOUTS

- Handout 1: Definition cards for biased writing and filter bubbles.
- Handout 2
- Handout 3

## ▶ KEY CONCEPTS

# BIASED WRITING



### DEFINITION

Biased writing occurs **when an author shows favouritism or prejudice towards a particular opinion, instead of being fair and balanced**. It is often used to drive people towards certain viewpoints or actions and can appeal to the reader's emotions rather than encouraging them to think critically.

### TEACHER EXPLANATION

Bias in writing is not new. It disguises opinion as fact, hoping to sway the reader's understanding of, or stance on, a topic without their knowledge. Mixing fact and opinion in the media has a real impact on public discussion, preventing individuals from establishing their own opinion or considering different aspects of a specific issue/event.

Biased content can also lead people to misunderstand important issues or ignore opposing viewpoints. When you can neither recognise nor understand alternative views, it becomes harder to solve difficult problems as a society. Separating fact from opinion can help us navigate current events, construct our ideas from a range of sources, and understand views different from our own.

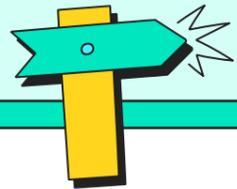
Dis- and misinformation are distinct from biased writing and being able to differentiate between them is an important skill. Biased writing is based on a real story or topic, but refers to coverage which is strongly opinionated to the extent it lacks nuance or fails to represent the breadth of a topic. At a broad level, some of the different ways in which writing can be biased are

- Positive bias = exaggerated praise for the subject being written about
- Negative bias = attacking the subject matter and exaggerating criticisms

Both positive and negative bias can use a 'black-and-white' framing, i.e. stories that rely on overstated heroes and villains. To use a cultural parallel, it might be interesting to discuss how the comic book universe has changed, from more traditional Superman/Wonder Woman models in the 1950s (flawless superheroes) to characters like Deadpool, Iron Man, Batman or John Wick (flawed heroes or anti-heroes). The latter type is more common now, and reflects the fact that people are rarely 'all good' or 'all bad' – this is a good attitude to use when reading the news.

Balanced or neutral perspective = the opposite of biased. This type of writing doesn't have an explicit opinion or agenda but merely reports the facts of a situation. Impartiality is a [core principle](#) of most reputable news outlets and journalist training schemes.

Consider the difference between Breaking News and Opinion features in a major newspaper – one outlining immediate events and data, another analysing its possible meaning and consequences. Both can be valid types of journalism, but they serve a different purpose and should be approached differently by the reader.



You can refer to the teacher guidance sections throughout the lesson plan for additional information on biased writing.

## ▶ KEY CONCEPTS FILTER BUBBLE

### DEFINITION

Filter bubbles occur **when users are suggested content based on previous internet search history and interactions**. Over time they can isolate users from any viewpoints or interests different from their own. Long-term, this can limit people's understanding of complex topics or events and reduce empathy and dialogue between different groups.

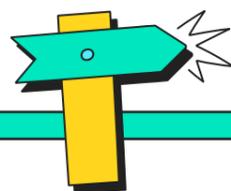
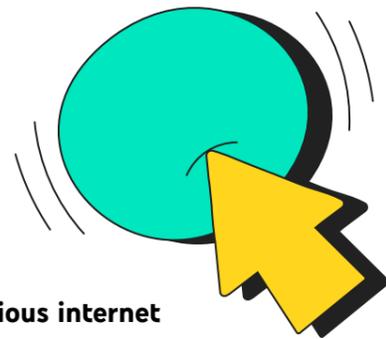
### TEACHER EXPLANATION

Filter bubbles are a part of our everyday experience online, but can prevent us from being exposed to new and different viewpoints. They are a product of algorithms and other technology, which work to create the most personalised experiences for internet users on social media. This includes suggesting content which reflects a user's known interests and opinions, often based on their previous search and watch history, as well as their personal data (e.g. information which suggests the user's age, gender, ethnicity, geography, education level, religion, sexuality or political views, and therefore what content they will enjoy).

This hyper-tailored experience has a business incentive: it increases the likelihood that a person will keep browsing and engage with the platform, or even purchase a certain product or service. There are clear upsides to personalisation, not least that it makes social media seem designed for our needs, including content that is most resonant with our day-to-day experiences and that has been consumed by like-minded people.

However, these individual bubbles can blind us to a world where people have vastly different views and beliefs. A key consequence is that people may develop a one-sided or overly simplified understanding of issues and events, in a way which does not reflect on-the-ground reality. As online users, it is our responsibility to consider the different sides of a story and establish a well-informed basis before (re)acting.

Filter bubbles can isolate users in political, social, cultural or ideological groups, a phenomenon which is closely related to echo chambers (explored in the next lesson). They can push people towards more extreme positions and reduce their empathy for people who think differently.



You can refer to the teacher guidance sections throughout this lesson plan for additional information on filter bubbles.

## FURTHER INFORMATION ON BIASED WRITING AND FILTER BUBBLES

RESOURCE	SUMMARY	AGE-GROUP SUITABILITY
<a href="#">BBC Bitesize on bias</a>	KS3-targeted educational resource on bias and reliability in the media.	All ages
<a href="#">BBC Bitesize on filter bubbles</a>	Short resource, including educational video, describing the filter bubble phenomenon.	All ages
<a href="#">Official Media Bias Fact Check</a>	Free Chrome extension that highlights the political bias of news websites when users visit them.	All ages
<a href="#">PC Mag UK: 'How to Spot Fake News Online'</a>	List of plug-ins to help internet users establish media bias on webpages and identify 'fake news'.	All ages
<a href="#">Fair.org</a>	Detailed list of indicators for media bias and questions to help detect it.	For teachers

Please note, the resources in the above table have not been quality assured by the PSHE Association.

# LESSON ACTIVITIES PLAN

## ▶ STARTER ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

1. **T displays a biased headline on PPT: “Grime is the best music on earth”, says world-famous grime artist.** T asks the question: Is this an example of dis- or misinformation? Why/why not?
2. **S work in pairs or groups to decide whether or not this is an example of dis-/misinformation.**
3. **S feed back and justify their answers to the class.**
4. **T leads a discussion using key questions (\*).**
5. **S mind-map what they think biased writing means.**
6. **T takes feedback on biased writing and then displays a definition of the term.** T discusses the term with the class using key questions (\*\*).



### KEY QUESTIONS

(\*)

- What is the difference between a fact and an opinion?
- Does the writer of this headline try to present it as a fact or an opinion?
- Can opinions ever be examples of dis- or misinformation?
- What is another term for this type of opinionated writing?

(\*\*)

- Where have you seen biased writing before?
- Can you give an example of a biased opinion?
- Are there different types of bias?
- What impact can bias have on people?
- How can both fact and opinion contribute to public knowledge on a subject?
- Is biased writing always bad? What purpose can it serve?

### TEACHER GUIDANCE

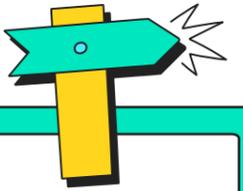
This activity will help introduce one of the lesson's key concepts: biased writing. In particular, students will consider how it differs from disinformation, where false information is often presented as fact-based reporting. You could compare this biased headline with one of the disinformation headlines used in Lesson 1.

Students should understand that along with factual reporting on issues and events, 'opinion pieces' are a key component of journalism today. These offer writers the opportunity to comment on a specific issue or topic from their perspective: they may still cite facts and evidence to support their point of view, but the objective of this journalism is to argue their perspective to readers.

Students should use their learning from the previous lesson to recall that disinformation is entirely invented or false, while biased writing is based on a real story or topic but is strongly opinionated, to the extent that it can lack nuance or fail to represent key elements. In their mind-maps, students may highlight::

- The type of language used (e.g. sensationalist and exaggerated; intended to persuade)
- A greater emphasis on opinion over fact
- A stated preference or dislike for one thing above another (and therefore a lack of balance).

Use the Teacher Explanation guide to introduce the topic of biased writing and its possible consequences.



## ▶ MAIN ACTIVITY 1 (20 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

- 1. T splits the class into groups.** Each group is given an example of biased writing from Handout 3.
- 2. S analyse their biased writing example using key questions (\*) as a guide.**
- 3. Each group feeds back to the rest of the class.** S are encouraged to comment on each other's examples of bias.
- 4. T shows PPT slide displaying all headlines used in the lesson so far.** T asks S to consider: which stories are people more likely to share online and why?
- 5. T leads discussion with the whole class, using key questions (\*\*) as a guide.**
- 6. T displays PPT slide which shows question to segue into the next part of the lesson:**  
"What can happen online when people react to, comment on, or share content on social media?"



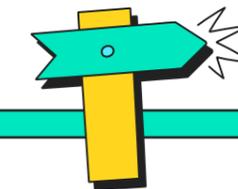
### KEY QUESTIONS

(\*)

- To what extent is this writing biased?
- What marks this out as biased or not?
- What does the author want the reader to think when reading this?
- Could the author have tried to make this piece more balanced? How might they have done this?
- As a reader, how could you use the information in this article, and what might you need to get a fuller picture?

(\*\*)

- What makes these stories more likely to be shared online (via social media or private groups)?
- What are some possible consequences of emotionally manipulative language? Is biased writing always bad? What purpose can it serve?



### TEACHER GUIDANCE

Through their analysis and comparison of the biased writing examples, students should recognise on a basic level that writing can be skewed in various ways. This includes:

**Positive bias** (Example #1) = exaggerated praise for the subject being written about.

**Negative bias** (Example #2) = attacking the subject matter and overstating the reasons why it is bad.

**Balanced or neutral perspective** (Example #3) = this is the opposite of biased writing, i.e. it doesn't include an opinion but instead presents facts without analysis or spin.

To develop a more detailed understanding of how media bias works, students should consider the following:

**Bias by omission:** in which media outlets choose not to cover certain stories or leave out information that would support a different viewpoint/interpretation of events.

**Bias by selection of sources:** when the writer includes more sources that support one view (their own) than another. This is especially important in scientific discussions, where a few outlier 'experts' are used against the overwhelming consensus of the field (e.g. in climate change denial).

**Political bias:** albeit to varying extents, most publications have a certain political slant, most likely towards left- or right-wing politics or other key divisions such as the Remain vs. Leave political debate in the UK. Where these slants are found, reporting may lean favourably towards a certain political party or representative, or a viewpoint that is aligned with a particular brand of politics.

**Statements presented as facts:** when the writer tries to blur the line between fact and opinion to make their argument more convincing, e.g. "The latest controversy is evidence that she has not changed her ways".

**Emotionally manipulative language/sensationalism:** when information is presented to shock, cause outrage or make a lasting and emotive impression. Such content

can distract us from thinking clearly about the point being made and the detail of a story. This technique can be used for both good (e.g. to convince people to sign up to charities) or bad (e.g. to stir up anger and resentment towards groups or individuals).

For example:

*"Queen fury as Meghan and Harry say: We Quit!"*

*"SHAME: English football team fails a nation."*

*"Don't join the army. Don't become a better you."*

*"The Arctic is hurting. How dare you turn away."*

*"Meat is murder. Try vegan."*

This final point is key – emotive or sensationalist content often receives higher engagement online, in part because it captures our attention and preys on elements of intrigue, scandal, gossip, controversy and drama. Engagement could mean people liking, reacting to, commenting on, sharing or copying the content in question through other formats. In line with the technology that underpins social media, this can lead platforms to populate your newsfeed with similar viewpoints from identical or parallel sources. When this happens, people experience the effects of a 'filter bubble'.

Lesson 3 will look in more detail at personal biases and how they affect our view of the world. However, this activity should encourage students to pause and reflect when they see an example of biased and/or sensationalist content online. They should ask:

- What emotions am I experiencing while I read this?
- What is making me feel these emotions?
- Do I have enough information to justify this response?
- How can I get more information on this story or topic before forming an opinion?
- Should I share this with others, and will it have positive or negative effects on my community?

## ▶ MAIN ACTIVITY 2 (15 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

1. T introduces the concept of filter bubbles to S.
2. S work in pairs or groups to produce a list of:
  - 2x possible negative consequences of filter bubbles
  - 2x possible benefits of filter bubbles
  - Use key questions (\*) to support S where necessary.
3. S present their ideas to the rest of the class and discuss.



### KEY QUESTIONS

(\*)

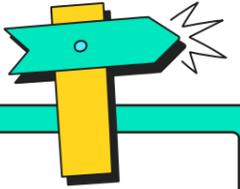
#### Negatives:

- What might happen if we only get our information from sources that all have the same opinion on a topic? (e.g. warped perception of what is happening in the world or what 'most people' believe; forming beliefs based on peer pressure as opposed to research and debate; becoming alienated from people who think differently about a topic or event).
- What might happen if we only look at content that is targeted towards us on social media? What skills might we be limiting? (e.g. missing out on new experiences and opportunities; becoming more susceptible to advertising and marketers; easier to target with scams)

(\*\*)

#### Positives:

- When might it be useful to have content targeted at you personally? (e.g. adverts for products; notifications of music and sporting events; news about your favourite show or celebrity).
- What positives might come from being directed towards people with similar interests to you online? (e.g. forming communities and friendships around common interests; a greater sense of belonging and support; people who understand your viewpoint), the spread of this information if you discovered it online, or saw a friend/relative sharing it?



### TEACHER GUIDANCE

Use your **Teacher Explanation** to explore the filter bubble concept.

#### Possible Negatives

Where they exist, filter bubbles can repetitively feed us similar information, which in turn may limit or narrow our understanding of what we read online, be it a news story or influencer's messages (for example). This occurs by presenting users with similar, one-sided or even inaccurate content, and therefore not exposing them to diverse information or opinions.

#### Possible Benefits

Seeing personalised content online can be useful: filter bubbles can recommend products (e.g. trainers) or services (e.g. a mental health helpline) that we have been trying to find. Similarly, filter bubbles may help connect us to other like-minded individuals online, which can in turn lead to unexpected friendships or becoming part of new communities.

Regardless of whether a filter bubble is limiting the information we see online or not, we should always think critically and ask ourselves:

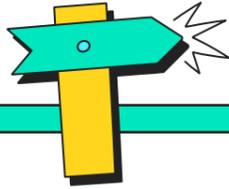
- Do I feel like I am often getting the same information from the same place?
- Are these sources of information trustworthy? Why should I believe them?
- What are the benefits of getting information from different credible sources (even if I disagree with the viewpoint)?

**Differentiation:** if students struggle to list positives and negatives, the points listed above could be jumbled into one list. Students could then identify which is which and write a brief justification for their choice.

## ▶ PLENARY (10–15 MINUTES)

**1. Class checklist:** as a class, S produce a series of questions and/or actions they can use to assess the quality of information, and the ways they should approach online content.

**2. S can fill out the relevant questions in their reflective journal (see Handout 2).**



## TEACHER GUIDANCE

This summary is an opportunity to reflect on and combine the key learnings from Lessons 1 and 2. The checklist produced can be printed and displayed in the classroom to remind students how to engage responsibly with the information they see online. It could include (but is not limited to):

- Establish the source of information and whether it is reliable.
- Fact-check suspicious information by using sites such as fullfact.org or by looking at other trusted websites.
- Use common sense to consider how likely the information is to be true. Does it sound ridiculous and unbelievable? If so, even a brief Google search could expose it as false.
- Use functions such as reverse image search to identify the source of suspicious-looking or sensational images.
- Analyse the headline to gauge how realistic a news story might be. Read on to check the story matches the headline. Top rule: never share an article without reading it yourself, even if the headline seems exciting/relevant to your friends or relatives!
- Consider the motivations of the writer. Who are they trying to convince and why might this be?
- Question how balanced or biased the information is – does it take a range of views into account or are the sources all one-sided?
- Before reacting online, consider your own response to the information – has it made you feel a certain way, and if so why? Do you feel you have enough information to form a view? If so, is it responsible to share what you have read or seen with others?



## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

**1. Subjective to objective translation:** this activity asks students to turn subjective statements into objective ones. Either choose examples found online or get students to write opinions on slips of paper and place them in a box. Each student then selects a statement, circles any words which are personal/subjective and tries to rewrite the phrase as something more objective/neutral. (e.g. 'XXX has again shown her bad attitude and unkindness' might become 'some are saying that this is not the first time she has displayed unkind behaviour, though other sources say this is an unfair judgement of her character, and that she has been misunderstood')

**2. Class debate on the following motions:**

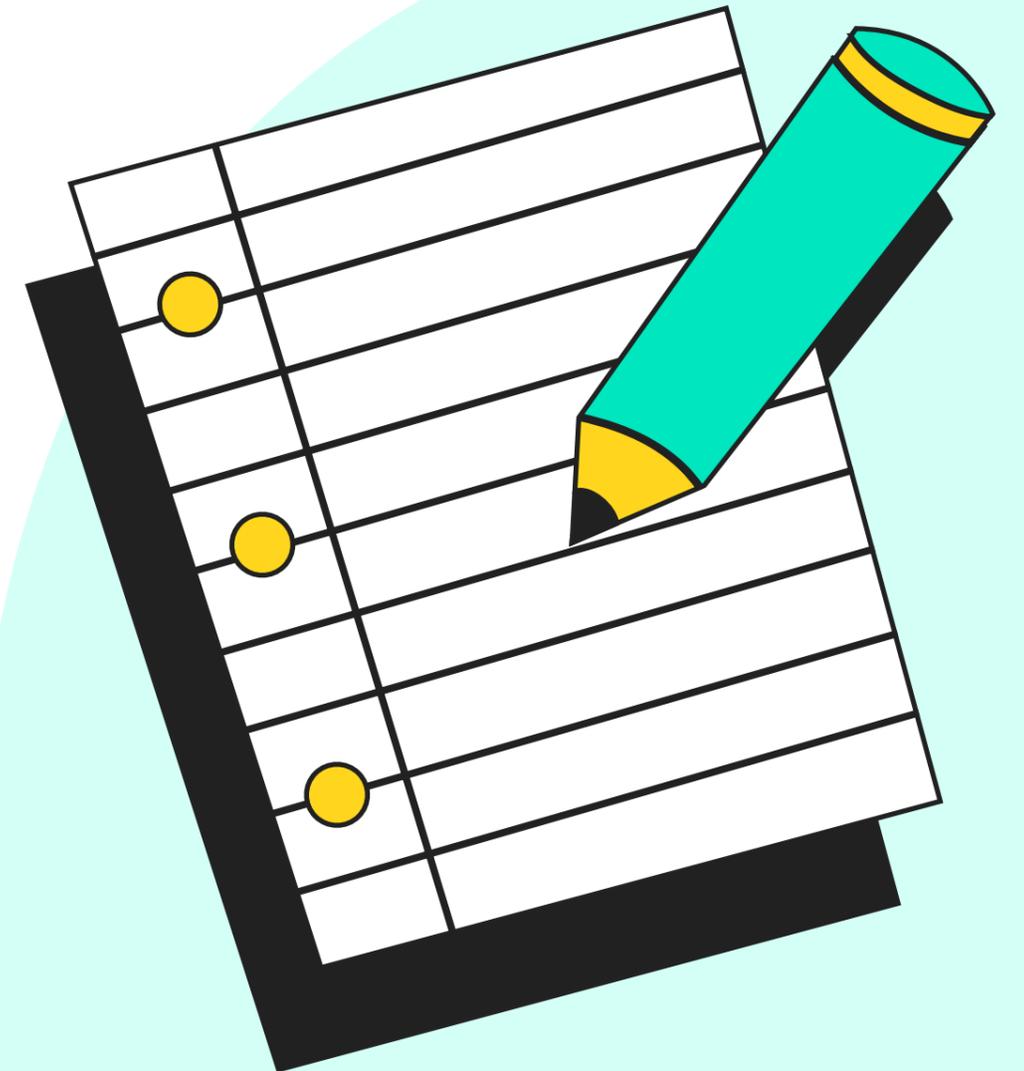
- *"It's impossible to persuade people without bias."*
- *"The point of social media is to recommend things I already know and like."*
- *"Bias always has the potential to be dangerous"*

# HANDOUTS

The following pages contain the supporting handouts to be photocopied and distributed to students.

**Handout 1** – Definition cards for biased writing and filter bubbles

**Handout 3** – Three examples of reporting on the same event, demonstrating different forms of bias



## ▶ HANDOUT 3

# BIASED WRITING EXAMPLES

Please insert the name of a female celebrity – relevant to the students you teach – into the spaces below.



### EXAMPLE #1 – POSITIVE BIAS:



**Inspirational** \_\_\_\_\_ **calls out horrifying social media ad for promoting fat-shaming.**  
\_\_\_\_\_ displayed a heroic attitude by taking on the major company in public, criticising its bullying attitude towards people who may be vulnerable and insecure over their weight.  
Fan-site we love \_\_\_\_\_ .com spoke out on the issue saying: “this is another demonstration that \_\_\_\_\_ really cares about people and is happy to put her neck on the line in order to stand up for them.”



### EXAMPLE #2 – NEGATIVE BIAS:



**Emotionally stunted** \_\_\_\_\_ **should solve her own issues before going after other people.**  
The selfish celebrity has found another opportunity to promote herself by jumping onto a big issue. \_\_\_\_\_ only seems to care when she is directly affected, and this instance proved to be no different. One source close to the star told us how: “it’s clear that \_\_\_\_\_ has a keen eye for opportunities to boost her profile and has taken full advantage of this at a time when her news coverage has been low”. Yet again, we see a sad case of a celebrity who just cannot keep themselves out of the headlines.



### EXAMPLE #3 – BALANCED OR NEUTRAL PERSPECTIVE:

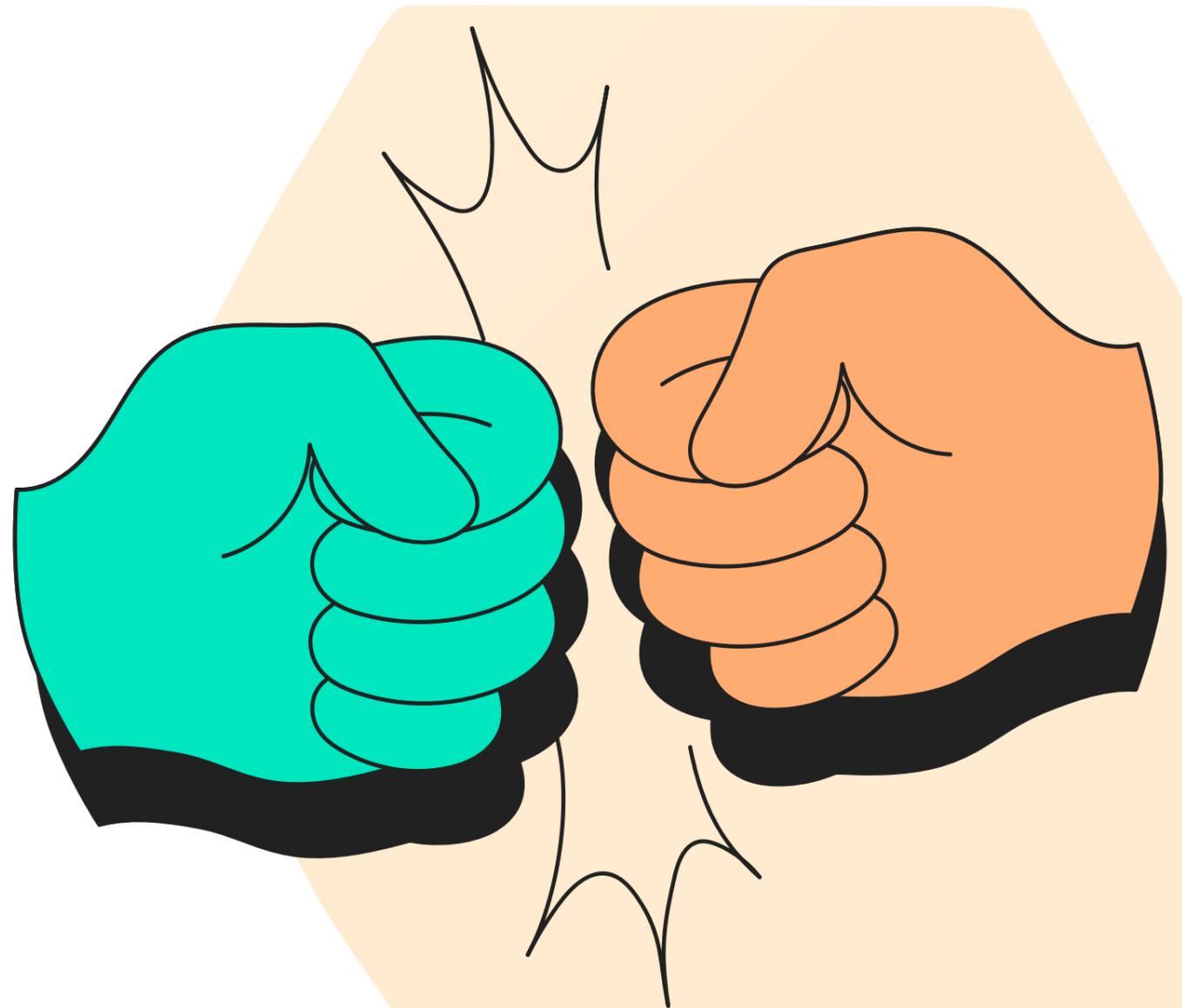


\_\_\_\_\_ **and social media company end spat over advert – company issues an apology.**  
A dispute between \_\_\_\_\_ and a major social media company is resolved after the company issued an apology last night. \_\_\_\_\_ said she was “appreciative of the company’s understanding on this matter” and hoped they would continue to remove fat-shaming content from their platform. A spokesman for the company said that it “understood how the advert could upset others” and recognised a mistake had been made.



# LESSON 3

# US VS THEM



# LESSON 3 US VS THEM LESSON PLAN

 Please note, all suggested activity timings can be adapted at your discretion, based on the needs of the class.

## OVERVIEW

This lesson explores how each person's biases, conscious and unconscious, can impact the way they perceive current affairs, form opinions, and relate to other people. Students will examine the concept of stereotyping and how it can lead to powerful 'us vs them' divisions in society. Students will also learn about echo chambers, and how these can serve to reinforce our biases and strengthen 'us vs them' thinking. Through the lesson activities, students should understand

how arguments made online can lead to real-world conflict and division, and consider the consequences of stereotyping on wellbeing. After this and the preceding two lessons, students should have a sound understanding of how certain online environments can shape opinion. Students will develop this further in Lesson 4, learning how to respond to hate speech and abuse online.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand what stereotyping is and how it leads to 'us vs them' thinking.
- To reflect on individual biases and how they affect our opinions and worldview.



### LEARNING OUTCOMES

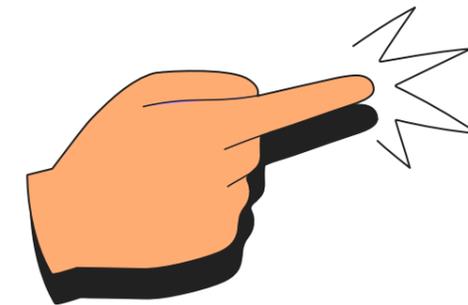
1. Students can explain what biased writing is and why writers might employ bias in their work.
2. Students can analyse the effects of media bias on individuals and society.
3. Students can define what a filter bubble is and explain its impact on individuals/society.
4. Students can explain the benefits of getting information from diverse sources.



### HANDOUTS

- Handout 1: Definition cards for stereotyping, 'us vs them' mentality, echo chambers.
- Handout 2
- Handout 4

## ▶ KEY CONCEPTS STEREOTYPING



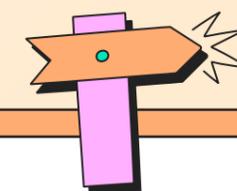
### DEFINITION

Stereotyping occurs **when we categorise or make assumptions about people based on basic characteristics**, for example their age, gender identity, skin colour, physical ability, sexuality, religion or even location. A stereotype presumes that everyone who shares these characteristics is the same, or that superficial aspects about a person can reveal their deeper likes, abilities, preferences and habits.

### TEACHER EXPLANATION

When we stereotype, we place someone in a group based on assumed things about their appearance or their personal background. While this is a natural process that can help us make quick decisions, it can also become an overly fixed and narrow way of viewing others. Grouping people is often harmful, as it causes us to pre-judge them based on just a few examples or casual observations. It suggests that everyone who shares a superficial trait or interest is the same, when this is clearly not the case. Such a process oversimplifies our understanding of individuals and their identities and can begin to embed in our brain as 'fact' even when we see evidence to the contrary.

This, in turn, limits our willingness and ability to understand people as individuals or empathise with their personal experience. For example, people often stereotype young children from an early age, assuming that boys will like football, tools and the colour blue, while girls will prefer playing with dolls and the colour pink. In this instance, we have assumed what they like based on gender, without ever asking their opinion. This can have real-world impacts, such as the number of women who pursue engineering and science in later life or the number of men who consider nursing and early years teaching.



You can refer to the teacher guidance sections throughout this lesson plan for additional information on stereotyping.

## ▶ KEY CONCEPTS US VS THEM

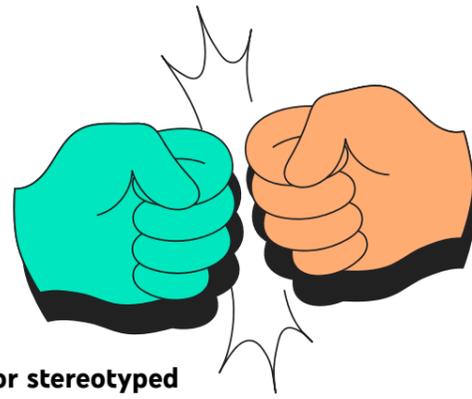
### DEFINITION

An 'us vs them' mentality **divides the world into negatively viewed or stereotyped out-groups (them), and positively viewed or victim in-groups (us)**. Divisions can be based on a wide range of characteristics such as race, religion, gender, class, nationality, and political views. It can even relate to culture, for example which sports team a person supports or what music they listen to.

### TEACHER EXPLANATION

In 'us vs them' mentalities, the out-group is generally stereotyped as being or behaving in one defined way, and can therefore be blamed for the problems experienced by the in-group. The division of groups into 'us' and 'them' exists throughout society, present in sports (fan rivalries between teams), politics (political party or affiliation), culture (hostility between different fanbases or 'stans') and even where you live (e.g. gang disputes based on postcodes and which street someone grew up on). On its own, identifying with specific 'tribes' is not always problematic.

Online forums are another place where the 'us vs them' dynamic can play out, with new groups forming and gaining thousands of followers at the click of a button. As these communities expand a group mentality may emerge, where individuals feel emboldened to blame, harass or intimidate those belonging to different groups. and can even play a positive role in people's lives, providing a sense of belonging and mutual interest. However, it can also generate hate and division by turning people against each other based on a perceived difference.



## ▶ KEY CONCEPTS ECHO CHAMBER

### DEFINITION

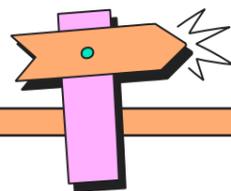
Echo chambers are **social spaces in which ideas, opinions and beliefs are reinforced by repetition** within a closed group.

### TEACHER EXPLANATION

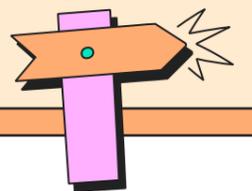
Within echo chambers, opposing views are either not expressed or represented, or actively dismissed and removed. Most people have first-hand experience with echo chambers – they can be found in everything from discussions conducted on news sites to private threads between friends. Echo chambers can be comfortable, since it is generally easier to agree with people in a discussion than disagree. They can also be harmful, reducing opportunities to interact with people who hold opposing views or come from different backgrounds and, in turn, reinforcing social division. Echo chambers can reduce individuals' understanding of different opinions and limit empathy for those who hold them.



While the echo chamber phenomenon is similar to filter bubbles, there are some key differences. For example, echo chambers can be found both on- and offline, whereas filter bubbles are generally a digital phenomenon, driven by algorithms. **It can also be helpful to think of echo chambers as a product of filter bubbles;** if the latter filters out the information we might not be interested in or disagree with, an echo chamber is what we are left with, where we become overexposed to one type of information.



You can refer to the teacher guidance sections throughout this lesson plan for additional information on 'us vs them'.



You can refer to the teacher guidance sections throughout this lesson plan for additional information on echo chambers.

## FURTHER INFORMATION ON STEREOTYPING AND 'US VS THEM' THINKING:

RESOURCE	SUMMARY	AGE-GROUP SUITABILITY
<a href="#">Equality and Human Rights Commission - Lesson Guide on Prejudice and Stereotyping</a>	Includes activities for learning through drama (role-play), as well as videos relating to disability-related bullying, racism and gender discrimination.	For teachers

Please note, the resources in the above table have not been quality assured by the PSHE Association.

# LESSON ACTIVITIES PLAN

## ▶ STARTER ACTIVITY (10-15 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

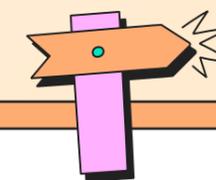
- 1. Individually, S examine a series of images. They should mind-map any words that come into their head when they look at each image.** T should encourage them not to filter their thoughts, but to write down exactly what they think (without using bad language and staying within the agreed ground rules).
- 2. T takes feedback from S, listening to the words they noted down for each image.** T should ask S to justify why they chose their words. Use key questions (\*) to prompt S to privately reflect on their word choices.
- 3. T discusses the idea that everyone has their own set of conscious and unconscious biases, using key questions as a guide (\*\*).**
- 4. T introduces the concept of stereotyping and asks S to consider its consequences for individuals and communities.**

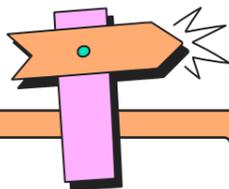


### KEY QUESTIONS

- (\*)
- Did this word instinctively pop into your head?
  - Why do you think that was?
  - Do you think anything influenced your opinion on this person?
  - Were you surprised by any of the words you chose?
- (\*\*)
- Can you think of any examples of online or offline content that might make you more biased towards something, someone, or a group of people?
  - What are we doing when we group people based on a set of biases? (e.g. what is it called if we put someone into a category or make an assumption about them because they are a man, woman, white person, Black person, religious person etc.?)
  - What effect do you think this has on society? (e.g. young people choosing careers; racism and violence).

Teacher guidance on the following page.





## TEACHER GUIDANCE

While the previous lesson focused on media, this lesson asks students to reflect on their own biases and how they affect their understanding of, and interaction with, other people.

The starter activity asks students to play word association with a series of images, to demonstrate how easy it is to stereotype people based on a set of assumptions (both collective and individual). You should source a range of images that students will likely have an opinion on, for example:

- A celebrity or influencer
- A politician
- A male athlete
- A female athlete
- A homeless person
- A businessman or woman
- A convict
- A rapper
- A person wearing a specific clothing brand

When reviewing the words that students associated with each image, ask those that volunteer to justify or explain their answers. You may want to note down these answers, particularly if they occur multiple times.

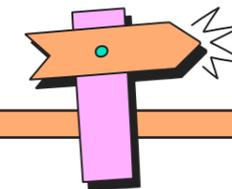
For example, students may point to online information which comments on a particular celebrity (whether they are a musician, actor, influencer, sports player) or homeless people generally, that has influenced their perception.

Many students may fail to provide a reason, even when pushed. Both answers expose something interesting about how opinions are formed, often without our knowing.

These responses are key for the following discussion on biases. Students should recognise that everyone has their own set of biases that shape how they relate to people and interpret the world around them. Some of these biases we are aware of, for example favouring a family member or friend over someone else, or supporting one sports team above another.

Other biases are unconscious, often shaped by our upbringing, family, friends, experiences, education and the content we consume. These can be even more powerful, in part because we are not aware they affect our ideas and decision-making and therefore do not consider or challenge them in our day-to-day life. Such biases can result in stereotyping individuals or groups of people, based on a set of assumptions about their identity.

As a way of demonstrating unconscious bias you could ask students the following: **“is Dr Pepper (name of popular fizzy drink) a man or a woman?”** or **“if your bike suddenly got a flat tyre, would you ask a man or woman to help you change it?”** If the majority of students put their hand up for man, you could probe further and ask why. Some may say that they typically see male doctors represented in the media, or they may say they don't know as they have never considered this, they just assumed it was the case. This is an example of unconscious bias in action, possibly based on more frequent representations of men in these roles than women.



## TEACHER GUIDANCE (CONT.)

Once you have introduced the term stereotyping and discussed the ideas above in further detail, ask students to consider the possible consequences (this will feed into the next activity).

Negative impacts could include:

- Causing people to feel judged, threatened or in danger based on inaccurate information.
- Causing harm to people's mental health by fuelling insecurities and self-consciousness based on a particular stereotype (e.g. wearing religious clothing/symbols, having a 'foreign-sounding' name, pursuing certain hobbies, liking a particular sports team or musician).
- Causing people to abuse or scapegoat others based on a particular characteristic (e.g. skin colour, gender, religion).
- Limiting our understanding of people who appear different to us in certain (often superficial) ways.
- Strengthening our unfair biases towards others, which in turn affects our behaviour and interaction with those groups.

## ▶ MAIN ACTIVITY (30 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

- 1. T explains to S that they are going to play *Mission to Mars*.** Divide S into two teams, Rover and Discover (see Handout 4). Use the PPT slide to explain that these two teams are going to compete to run the country. Each team will be given a set of skills that they should use to argue their case to travel and form the new Mars City!
- 2. Each team should brainstorm why their set of skills makes them well-placed to join the mission, on flip-chart paper.** Encourage them to consider knowledge, skills and experience, as well as what would be needed to survive on a new planet. They should add points to their flipchart in preparation for the final debate. During this time, T provides each group with more prompts about their team's identity: what are their core values, what do they stand for, what does their flag represent, what is the meaning behind the motto they have created on Handout 4?
- 3. The teams will then pitch for the opportunity to govern.** Each group should get 2-3 minutes to present their team and the relevant skill sets they bring. Once both teams have presented they will have another 5 minutes for extra points of information and debate, adding rebuttals and any additional reasons why their crew is superior. Decide which group will present their skills first, and give each the same amount of time. T should encourage them to be competitive with each other, using key questions (\*) as a guide. Once the debate has finished, T can choose a winner.
- 4. T asks each team to provide adjectives they would use to describe their own team (under 'Our team' heading) and the opposing team (under 'Their team' heading).** T captures adjectives on the whiteboard. T then removes headings and replaces them with the terms 'In-group' and 'Out-group'. T asks S to imagine these adjectives were used to describe different sides of a political, religious, cultural or class divide.
- 5. T introduces the idea of the 'us vs them' mentality, guided by key questions (\*\*).**
- 6. T introduces the idea of echo chambers and discusses their potential consequences,** using key questions to guide where necessary (\*\*\*)
- 7. In pairs, S produce a list of ways that they can bridge divides between individuals or communities.**
- 8. T takes feedback from S,** and discusses the importance of respecting other people's identities and vice versa.



### KEY QUESTIONS

(\*)

- What skills does your team have that the other lacks?
- Why would your crew be useful in this scenario?
- Which team is more practical/creative/varied/successful?
- What makes your crew special in comparison to the other group?
- Why is the other group unsuitable for this task?

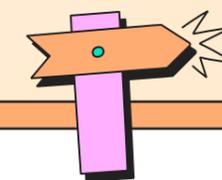
(\*\*)

- What emotions did you feel while playing the game?
- How competitive did you get? Why do you think this was?
- Now you have learnt about the 'us vs them' mentality, can you imagine how powerful this feeling might be if the game was based on differences in identity, culture, politics or religion?
- Can you think of examples where you have seen the 'us vs them' mentality in action, either on- or offline?
- How does an 'us vs them' mentality affect both individuals and communities?

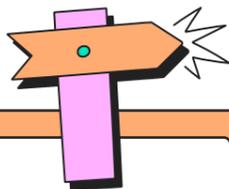
- Can what we see online reinforce 'us vs them' thinking, and support our existing biases? What type of content might do this, and how does it affect us?
- Thinking back to the last lesson, how should we respond when we see something online that provokes an emotional response?

(\*\*)

- How did being part of a group during 'Mission to Mars' affect your behaviour and the groups' behaviour as a whole?
- Think back to filter bubbles from the last lesson: if we only spoke to people with the same interests, opinions and biases as us, how might that affect the way we view certain topics?
- How might this affect the way we relate to other people ('them'), who are not a part of our groups ('us')?
- What could the consequences of 'us vs them' and echo chambers be?



Teacher guidance on the following page.



## TEACHER GUIDANCE

This activity is designed to demonstrate how quickly we can begin to stereotype others, and in doing so fall victim to an 'us vs them' mentality. While the groups are discussing their pitch, spend time with each to build their sense of identity. Each group should feel allegiance to their team.

**Team Discover** is defined by practical, 'hard' skills. They can use their technical competence and efficiency to build a prosperous society, founded on a dedication to hard work.

**Team Rover** boasts a range of 'soft' and creative skills. These will enable them to build a flourishing community, founded on principles of cooperation, peaceful coexistence and problem-solving.

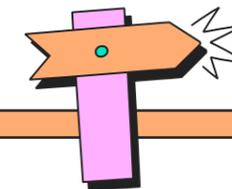
As you move between them, boost each group's sense of pride in their team and stir rivalry based on key differences (e.g. Team Discover are cold and uncaring, Team Rover are weak and lack the technical skills to survive), although be clear that any personal attacks towards their classmates will be disqualified. In justifying why their characters and skill sets are superior, students should experience a friendly and competitive tension, helping them reflect on the 'us vs them' dynamics which arise.

Following the game, emphasise that students just experienced a form of 'us vs them' thinking, even though the groups were entirely random and the task had no real stakes or significance. When collecting adjectives, students are likely to highlight the strengths of their team, while resorting to insults and stereotypes about their counterparts. Prompt them to consider whether this form of oppositional thinking is found elsewhere in society (such as religious, political, class or cultural divides), and how this reflects many people's tendency for 'us vs them' viewpoints.

**Differentiation:** to ensure all students feel able to contribute to the debate, you could assign a specific skill for each of them to present on (or in pairs, depending on class size). This ensures the activity isn't dominated by a small number of more confident/vocal students.

Use Teacher Explanation to guide the discussion on this concept. Belonging to a group with a name and purpose quickly created an identity, turning them against each other and encouraging stereotypes about the opposing side. Students should understand that divisions between social groups exist and are often reinforced by 'us vs them' thinking, especially when people feel empowered to use aggressive and hateful speech behind a computer screen (or even anonymously).

You could then prompt students to consider where they have seen this mentality in action: can they give examples of 'us vs them' thinking in comments on social media posts? Or even in the headlines of more traditional media? Have they ever witnessed the negative consequences of 'us vs them' thinking, whether on- or offline? For example, they could refer to intense rivalries that exist for fans of certain sports teams (e.g. Liverpool vs Manchester United) or musicians (e.g. Drake vs Chris Brown; Adele vs Taylor Swift; K-Pop vs J-Pop), feuds between influencers (such as YouTubers Logan Paul and KSI; beauty vloggers James Charles and Tati Westbrook), or in the world of online gaming.



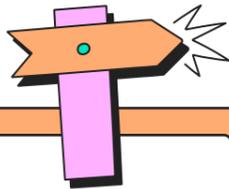
## TEACHER GUIDANCE (CONT.)

**These feuds are often based on personal interactions, differences of opinion or misunderstandings which have no impact on the general public; however, because supporters feel compelled to defend their idols, they can spiral into vicious attacks online and have real-world consequences.** These include arguments that descend into abuse, death-threats, trolling and, in extreme cases, publishing a person's identifying information like a home address or contact number (a trend known as doxxing). These methods are never justified and are in no way proportionate to the perceived 'crime'. Nonetheless, people can feel emboldened by the support of their in-group, become swept up in the frenzy, and post things they would never say offline or face-to-face.

Referring back to the starter activity, you could discuss how what we see online – especially content targeted to us via a filter bubble – can reinforce unconscious bias. This is especially true with emotive content which can provoke feelings of anger or indignation. When this happens, we may become even more attached to an 'us vs them' mentality and strengthen our stereotypes about others.

You could ask students to consider Nazi Germany as an historic example of 'us vs them' thinking – early propaganda blamed Jewish citizens for Germany's economic problems, even though the primary reason for debt was WW1 and various reparations. This spiralled over time until Jewish communities were considered the downfall of society, providing the rationale for genocide. Equally, an 'us versus them' mentality lies at the core of slavery and caste systems, since it generally suggests that a certain race, profession, history or ethnicity renders someone 'less human'.

Here, you could mention that propaganda is sometimes based on spreading false facts about a target group (thinking back to the lesson on disinformation), and achieves results by manipulating people's emotions or fears. A common example would be immigration, where foreign workers are blamed for an economic downturn and job losses, despite all evidence to the contrary.



## TEACHER GUIDANCE (CONT.)

Use the Teacher Guidance to discuss the idea of echo chambers. Students should refer to the previous lesson: echo chambers are often a consequence of filter bubbles, i.e. if we receive most of our information from sources who adopt the same views or give us a one-sided picture of events, we can quickly find ourselves in an echo chamber. This is not necessarily a bad thing in every instance: echo chambers can bring a sense of community, and an opportunity to enjoy a common interest with like-minded people. Indeed, social media has facilitated global connection between people, providing access to a vast number of groups and fora through which they can build relationships and learn from each other. On the other hand, if they are based on shared stereotypes of others, this can push people further into 'us vs them' thinking and lead to greater divides between groups.

Ultimately, students should recognise the importance of critical thinking when consuming information or content online. This means questioning why we agree with something, and whether our opinions and viewpoints are based on credible information or an emotional gut-reaction. We should always ask ourselves, "do I only agree with this because it supports my biases?", and "is this content unhelpfully stereotyping a particular group in society?". Challenging our viewpoints is useful, if only because it helps us explain the reasoning and rationale for those beliefs to others.

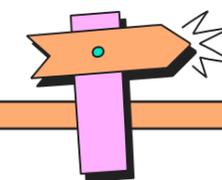
When discussing the power of community, ask students to think of people in their lives that are effective at bringing others closer together or helping to bridge divides. This could be someone they know personally (e.g. a family member, friend, youth worker), or in the public sphere (e.g. an online influencer, politician, sportsperson). They should consider the positive impact of social media on a variety of inspiring initiatives like #Clapforourcarers or Youth Strike for Climate in promoting solidarity, and powerful messages of influencers such as Nadir Nahdi, Nas Daily, Jessica Kellgren-Fozard, Agon Hare, Tyler Oakley, Harnaam Kaur or Salice Rose, who promote respect for diverse identities (some of these are YouTube Creators for Change).

## ▶ PLENARY (10–15 MINUTES)

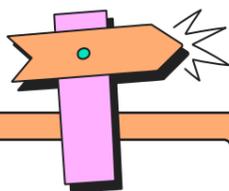
**1. S use the remainder of the lesson to reflect on and answer the following questions in their journal (Handout 2):**

- How might people stereotype you and why would this be inaccurate? What adjectives do you wish they would use instead?
- How has this lesson changed how you feel about yours and others' identities?

**2. S can then volunteer to share their answers with the class.**



Teacher guidance on the following page.



## TEACHER GUIDANCE

When listening to students' responses, emphasise that individuality is a virtue and it is possible to feel part of a group without alienating/demonising others. Belonging to a community should never mean you have to think, believe or act the same as everyone else – that is a cult! The internet can feel like a zero-sum place, where only one fanbase or phenomenon can be king – in reality, people are not one-dimensional, and our likes/interests are entirely personal, unique and sometimes 'contradictory' (e.g. a bodybuilder who does ballet). Stereotyping can be tempting because it makes the world easier to understand, but it takes us further away from connecting with people or exploring their viewpoints in any meaningful way.

As this is a personal reflection activity, S do not need to share their responses with the class. However, some S may volunteer to contribute, particularly to the question in their journals: "How would the world be different if people stopped stereotyping others?"

When considering how to recognise and counteract their own and others' biases, students could mention the following:

- **Actively listen to other people's perspectives rather than automatically judging them:** this helps to build empathy and develop an understanding of why someone holds a certain point of view. This doesn't mean you have to agree with them – indeed, it may reinforce your own existing opinion – but it lays the foundation for effective communication and means disagreement can be respectful rather than hostile.

- **Pause to consider your response to information or interactions:** this is especially important online where social media can lead to brief or potentially thoughtless interactions, including more fast-paced platforms where discussion moves rapidly through a feed or there are limits on the length of content (e.g. character count on posts and comments; maximum post length). Before sharing content or communicating with others online, it is useful to ask: *am I acting out of impulse/emotion or have I really considered what I am about to say? Am I about to stereotype? Would I make the same point if it related to someone of a different race or gender? Would I say this to someone's face?*
- **Embrace diversity:** we can prevent the harmful consequences of echo chambers by seeking diversity in our friendships, interests and interactions. This is more possible than ever via the internet, where we can learn from and engage with endless communities if we make the smallest effort to seek them out.
- **Avoid generalisations about individuals or groups:** making broad statements about people with little understanding of their true identity strengthens negative stereotypes. Not only can this cause hurt, but it limits your opportunity to experience meaningful engagement or even friendships with others. We must also speak up when those around us make similar generalisations, explaining to them why their statements are problematic. It can be really hard to confront friends and family on these topics, but stereotypes thrive when we stay silent.



## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

1. **Unconscious biases:** ask students to imagine a scientist, considering the specific details of what they look like. After about 20 seconds, put a stock photo of an older, white-skinned man wearing a lab coat on the screen, and ask how many students pictured something similar or identical. Similarly, students may imagine athletes to be exclusively able-bodied people, despite there being a huge number of Paralympians. This is a good illustration of bias and works in many scenarios.
2. **Search engine bias:** type the words 'sports player' or 'footballer' into a search engine. You should find that the vast majority are images of men, despite the number of female sports players and celebrities in the public sphere. Similarly, until recently typing 'CEO' into an image search revealed pages of Caucasian-looking men – the first image of a woman was around #100 and pictured Boss Barbie! Search engines have since amended their results to show far greater diversity in both gender and ethnicity, and are constantly trying to improve. That said, a search for 'girl's toy' will still reveal almost exclusively pink dolls and beauty kits, while 'boy's toy' shows cars, superheroes and construction tools. Such biases profoundly limit our understanding of the world and reinforce stereotypes that do not reflect reality.

### 3. Class debates the following motions:

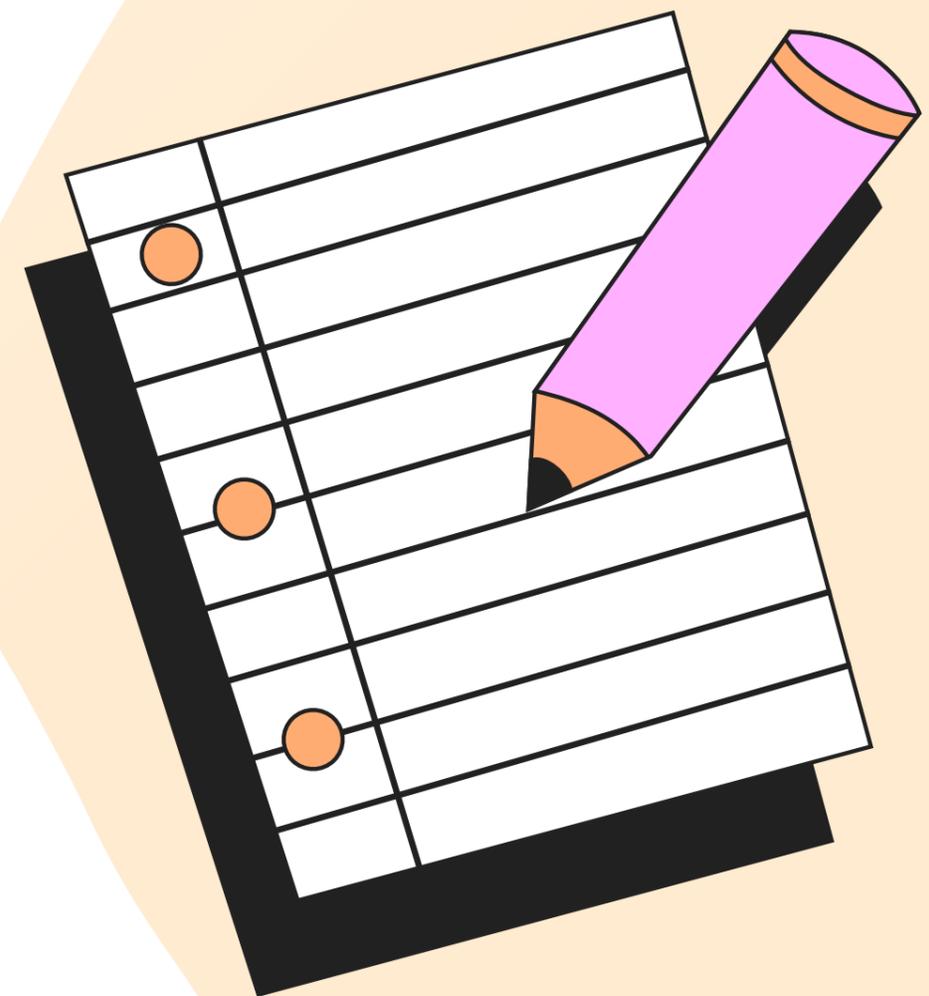
- "There is no point debating people on social media."
- "Social media is better at uniting than dividing."
- "Echo chambers are a positive form of community."

# HANDOUTS

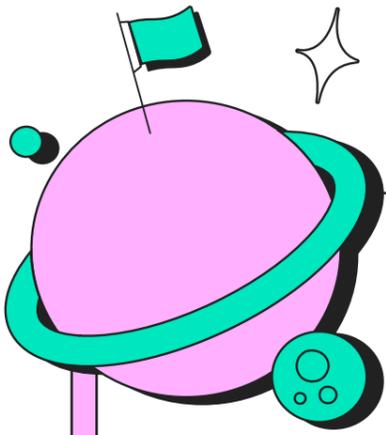
The following pages contain the supporting handouts to be photocopied and distributed to students.

**Handout 1** – Definition cards for stereotyping, 'us vs them' mentality, echo chambers

**Handout 4** – Sets of skills for Team Rover and Team Discover



▶ **HANDOUT 4**  
**MISSION TO MARS**



# ROVER

**Motto:**

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**Adaptability**

**Time management**

**Teamwork**

**Emotional maturity**

**Storytelling and  
communication skills**

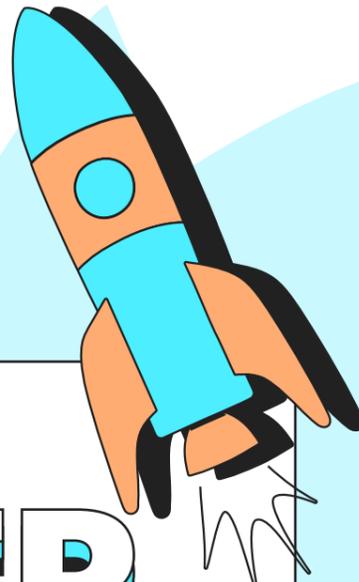
**Problem-solving skills**

**Conflict resolution /  
peacekeeping**

**Creative thinking**

**Collective values and  
moral code**

▶ **HANDOUT 4**  
**MISSION TO MARS**



# DISCOVER

**Motto:**

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**Construction skills**

**Rationing and budgeting**

**Engineering skills**

**Organisation /  
administrative skills**

**Resourcefulness**

**Medical skills / first aid**

**Scientific knowledge  
and logic**

**Leadership skills**

LESSON 4

**SPEAKING UP,  
SPEAKING OUT**



## LESSON 4

# SPEAKING UP, SPEAKING OUT

## LESSON PLAN



Please note, all suggested activity timings can be adapted at your discretion, based on the needs of the class.

### OVERVIEW

This lesson is designed to help students unpack the right to free speech and the responsibilities that come with it. Through the activities, they will examine how free speech is defined in UK law and its role in promoting democratic dialogue, but also how it can be manipulated by a range of bad actors – such as members of hate and extremist groups – to enable divisive, hateful and 'borderline' illegal content online.

Students will also explore where free speech veers into hate speech online, including key distinctions, and the negative impacts on those affected, whether as direct targets or related bystanders and peers. Finally, students will discuss various ways they can address online hate and abuse effectively, motivating them to become more proactive digital users and limit harm for themselves and others.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- To understand the difference between free speech and hate speech, and how to effectively respond to online hate and abuse.



### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students can define freedom of speech and explain the benefits it offers citizens and wider society.
2. Students can describe impactful, positive uses of freedom of speech online.
3. Students can define hate speech and identify cases online.
4. Students can explain the real-world harm caused by online hate speech for themselves and others.
5. Students are confident using a range of responses to hate speech and abuse online (e.g. reporting, counter-messaging, peer support, debunking false claims).



### HANDOUTS

- Handout 1: Definition cards for free speech and hate speech.
- Handout 2
- Handouts 5, 6 and 7

## ▶ KEY CONCEPTS

# FREE SPEECH

### DEFINITION

Free speech is **the right to hold opinions, and to receive and share information and ideas freely** without fear of retaliation or censorship by the government.

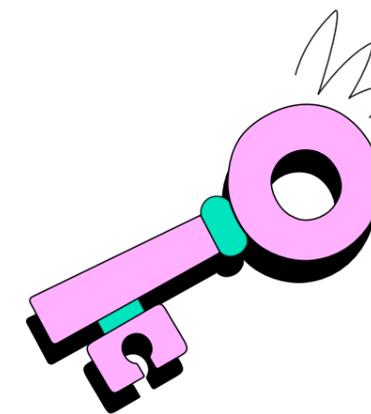
### TEACHER EXPLANATION

Freedom of expression is recognised as a human right under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In the UK, the Human Rights Act grants all citizens the right to free expression, giving each individual the freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart information without interference from the government. This includes the right to question, challenge or speak out against the deeply-held beliefs of others, including the government itself, a right that is not afforded in numerous countries around the world.

According to the law, the right to free speech carries certain duties and responsibilities, in particular that what a person says cannot threaten, dehumanise or encourage violence against others. Hate and extremist groups across different ideologies try to stretch this definition and expand what is permitted. Often they will actively spread hate and division under the banner of 'free speech', then claim that any efforts to limit harm are abusing their civil rights. Even if an act of speech is technically legal, it can still cause serious harm.

In addition, while everyone is entitled to hold personal beliefs and ideas, even controversial ones, we do not have an automatic right to publish those views online to the widest possible audience – in other words, **'freedom of speech does not equal freedom of reach'**. Social media platforms set their community guidelines, enabling them to remove or limit the distribution of content that breaches these rules, even if it is not technically illegal. User policies are public for all major platforms, and updated regularly to outline what is/is not acceptable. A good example is Germany, where it is illegal to deny the Holocaust occurred – the country is very aware how dangerous this conspiracy can be, and how traumatic for those whose families were victims in WWII, so prevent such views from being aired publicly.

Free speech must be exercised with care and consideration so that it becomes a tool for inclusion rather than intimidation and abuse (especially of minority groups). For example, you are entitled to disagree with someone's religious beliefs or be critical of religion broadly, but that does not mean you can purposefully attack or harass someone for their beliefs.



You can refer to the teacher guidance sections throughout this lesson plan for additional information on free speech.

## ▶ KEY CONCEPTS HATE SPEECH



### DEFINITION

Hate speech **attacks a person or group based on their race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or physical and mental abilities.** These are sometimes referred to as 'protected characteristics', i.e. things about an individual which cannot be changed, are central to their identity or 'make a person who they are'. As such, abusing someone or discriminating against them because of these factors is prejudiced and unfair.

### TEACHER EXPLANATION

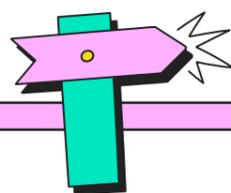
There are several laws which seek to protect certain characteristics from hate and abuse in the UK. These include:

- The Public Order Act (1986)
- The Malicious Communications Act (1988)
- The Religious and Racial Hatred Act (2006)
- The Equality Act (2010)

These laws provide a check on 'pure' freedom of expression, ensuring free speech is not misused to attack, oppress and intimidate individuals or groups in society. Online hate speech is both an ongoing and growing problem and something many young people will encounter on a variety of digital platforms. To date it has proven much harder to regulate, not least since many people cannot be identified online, or phrase their hateful comments to sit in the 'grey zone' between technically legal and prosecutable. Such hateful content can fuel 'us versus them' beliefs and drive individuals towards discriminatory and violent behaviour both on- and offline. Moreover, it can cause significant harm to those targeted by it, including immediate and long-term damage to mental wellbeing.

The Equality Act safeguards people from discrimination based on a range of characteristics that may be integral to their identity. In contrast, **things like political views or hobbies are not included, because they are more fluid, can shift over time, and encompass people from many different backgrounds.** While people may disagree with someone else's political views, or diverge in their interests, these typically reflect opinions rather than core beliefs and are therefore not subject to the same levels of prejudice or discrimination. You may vote for one political party today and another in the next election, or stop supporting one football team and join another, but this is fundamentally different from the colour of your skin, physical traits or religious values.

Effectively dealing with this material is key to tackling hate and extremism, whether that means preventing its creation or limiting its visibility and impact online. By learning the definitions of these concepts, students should recognise that hate speech is an illegal practice that creates or worsens divisions in society. Other consequences of hate speech include: damaging others' self-esteem and mental health, emboldening individuals to commit acts of violence, or causing people to develop inaccurate beliefs about certain groups or individuals.



You can refer to the teacher guidance sections throughout this session plan for additional information on hate speech.

### FURTHER INFORMATION ON FREE SPEECH AND HATE SPEECH:

RESOURCE	SUMMARY	AGE-GROUP SUITABILITY
<a href="#">SELMA: Hacking Hate</a>	A project to raise awareness about online hate speech, providing empirical research and a toolkit of educational resources.	All ages
<a href="#">Report Harmful Content</a>	A service provided by the UK Safer Internet Centre to support internet users report content that violates social media platform community guidelines.	All ages
<a href="#">Ditch the Label</a>	Youth charity that provides a range of resources to empower young people to overcome issues related to bullying, digital wellbeing, and on and offline relationships.	All ages
<a href="#">Citizens Advice: racist and religious hate crime</a>	A list of FAQ responses regarding racial and religious discrimination. Includes details on how to respond to incidents at home or school.	Suitable for students aged 15+
<a href="#">Press Freedom Index</a>	An index ranking 180 countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists.	A resource for teachers
<a href="#">Hope Not Hate</a>	A charitable trust that produces research around hate speech, racism and other forms of discrimination in the UK, as well as educational resources to help challenge prejudice.	A resource for teachers
<a href="#">DTL:ED</a>	The education arm of Ditch the Label, with free resources to explore issues such as bullying, digital literacy and gender stereotypes with groups aged 11-18.	A resource for teachers

Please note, the resources in the above table have not been quality assured by the PSHE Association.

# LESSON ACTIVITIES PLAN

## ▶ STARTER ACTIVITY (10–15 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

- 1. T displays the definition of 'free speech' on the board.** S should copy this down and T checks for understanding.
- 2. T explains the 'silent discussion' activity to S** (see Teacher Guidance).
- 3. S respond to the following questions,** each written on a piece of A2 or flip-chart paper:
  - Do you think it is important for society to have laws that enable free speech? Why/why not?
  - What might happen if we didn't have free speech and we were censored by those in power?
  - What are the different ways in which people can exercise their right to free speech?
  - How can people use free speech in a responsible way?
- 4. T should monitor responses and prompt S to stretch their thinking** as far as possible, using key questions (\*) to support if necessary.
- 5. C lass as a whole goes through the responses to each question.** Following discussion, T could stick each piece of paper in a corner of the room so they are displayed for the rest of the lesson.



### KEY QUESTIONS

(\*)

- How do we all benefit from being able to share and listen to other points of view?
- How does being able to express ourselves help us to grow as people?
- Do people exercise their right to free speech online as well as offline? On what different platforms?
- How can we communicate positively and effectively with others?

### TEACHER GUIDANCE

This starter activity allows you to benchmark students' understanding of the right to free speech. Through the silent discussion, students should acknowledge free speech as a fundamental human right for UK citizens, protected under domestic and international law. They should also consider how the rise of digital technology, and in particular social media, has provided a wide range of avenues through which people can exercise their right to free speech.

During the activity, students should silently write their answers to the questions on each piece of A2 paper, as well as reading and responding to the answers left by their peers. This way, discussions will stem from each question, and all students should feel encouraged to take part with their written contributions.

Use the Teacher Explanation to guide your introduction to the concept of free speech. Students should recognise that free speech allows citizens to hold opinions, and to receive and impart information on almost any issue, free from government interference or censorship. In a true democracy each individual is entitled to their own beliefs and points of view.

By way of comparison, students should be made aware that not all countries permit freedom of speech, and many actively try to suppress it. You could draw examples from the Press Freedom Index, which highlights what limited individual and collective rights can mean in practice. In some countries, citizens can be punished for viewing, reading or listening to content provided by a foreign media outlet, while in others the government imposes blocks on websites like Google, YouTube, Facebook, Wikipedia, Instagram, Twitch, TikTok and the BBC. By limiting the information available to citizens, governments can create their own version of reality, control public

understanding of the world and increase the impact of political propaganda. Even in some EU Member States, all major newspapers, radio stations and TV channels are being taken over by the government or its allies, making it difficult for any opposing viewpoints to enter the mainstream. This denies citizens a balanced debate on public life, including government actions, and effectively silences criticism.

Students should consider that in the UK the media is generally empowered to report on any topic without fear of censorship or punishment, including strong criticism of the government. The only limits are those sometimes imposed on stories which could endanger or bully individuals with no public benefit (e.g. sharing details of someone's personal life when it has no relevance to the general public), or that violate civil rights (e.g. by hacking a person's phone to gain information). This privilege extends to individuals – students should recognise that they can comment on any issue or event that interests them, in both on- and offline settings. The meteoric rise of social media means that people can share their thoughts and feelings with any number of their peers and the wider public at one click of a button.

Of course, this system must have some checks and balances to keep everyone safe. Students should recognise that they have a responsibility to exercise free speech constructively. Without this, dialogue breaks down between individuals and groups, and it becomes harder or impossible to hold a reasonable discussion based on valid differences in opinion. Students should begin to consider what responsible exercising of free speech looks like, e.g. engaging with others in a productive, respectful way even when they do not agree on the issue at hand.

## ▶ MAIN ACTIVITY 1 (25 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

- 1. S brainstorm: features of effective and ineffective communication with others online.**  
**NB.** This activity may be better suited to a KS3 class. For older students, it could be replaced with a discussion around the following stimulus question: "Should we communicate to people online in the same way we communicate in the real world?"
- 2. T takes feedback and leads the discussion with S using key questions (\*).**
- 3. T displays the definition of hate speech to S.**  
S consider where examples of hate speech and abuse are found online, and why someone might post them, using key questions (\*\*) to guide the discussion.
- 4. S are split into six groups, and each group is given a case study to analyse (Handout 4). S discuss:**
  - How someone should respond if presented with these scenarios in reality.
  - The impact the scenarios could have on individuals involved.
  - The impact the scenarios could have on wider society.
- 5. T takes feedback from each group, asking other groups to comment on whether they agree or not with their analysis.**
- 6. T displays PPT slide and discusses the range of responses to online hate speech and abuse that S can take online.**



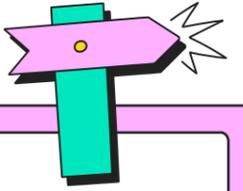
### KEY QUESTIONS

(\*)

- What are the benefits of effective communication?
- How does ineffective communication affect individuals or groups?
- How can online communication differ from offline communication? Is this better/worse? Why?
- Should our behaviour be any different online?
- Why/why not?
- Which offline behaviours should we replicate online?
- How do people abuse the right to free speech online?

(\*\*)

- What drives someone to post something hateful online?
- How might they be feeling?
- Why might they be feeling this way?
- Does the fact that they are posting online change the way they might express their views?
- Does online hate speech always reflect how the person posting it truly feels?
- If not, then why do they post?
- What are different ways in which hate speech might impact an individual on the receiving end?
- How does it affect society as a whole?



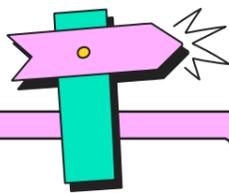
### TEACHER GUIDANCE

This activity prompts students to consider the principles and benefits of effective communication online. They should recognise that the standards of behaviour we use offline also apply on the internet, even if social media allows greater anonymity. **They should always ask themselves 'would I say this to a person's face?'** If not, it is inappropriate in any context (unless of course, they are reporting something which could not be expressed in person, like mental health issues or domestic abuse).

Maintaining good habits can be challenging and you should push students to consider why. For example, while social media has made it easy to communicate with a vast number of people around the world, the quality of these interactions can be shallow and fleeting, and have the potential to lead to greater misunderstanding or hostility towards others. While constructive discussions do take place on social media, comments sections are not always the best forum for debates on complex topics and can promote rapid responses above substantial or productive interactions. Discussions on such platforms can descend into abuse within just a few messages, as users – often emboldened by anonymity – post their opinions forcefully, quickly, and in a way that gains attention without truly considering another's point of view. In these scenarios, it often feels like the aim is to 'win' rather than learn or have a meaningful dialogue. People can also be looking for the most sensational or outrageous thing to say to 'go viral' and increase their likes, shares and comments.

- Students should consider how they would hope to be treated online, and the following key principles for their own interaction: A willingness to listen to other people's opinions and engage with them in a constructive way;
- A willingness to listen to other people's opinions and constructively engage with them.
  - A respectful, non-hostile tone, even when the debate becomes heated.
  - A consideration of other people's feelings, even when disagreeing with their point of view.
  - An open-mindedness and readiness to be educated on a topic.
  - An understanding of when to walk away from a discussion.
  - A commitment to separate people's identity from their opinions, and keep their private lives out of the debate (e.g. personal insults).
  - An appreciation of changing one's mind, and the strength in admitting 'I was wrong' or saying sorry.

Students need to understand that people will always disagree on issues, especially when they relate to complex and sensitive matters such as personal beliefs or values. The key is to respect each other's right to believe something different, so long as it does not directly endanger others. Students should consider the way they explore and criticise someone else's viewpoints; even if you disagree, reasoned debate is stronger than abuse, harassment or shaming. A constructive debate often leads us to develop a better understanding of opposing views, and therefore to articulate our own counter-arguments and beliefs.



## TEACHER GUIDANCE (CONT.)

In today's society, especially online, people abuse their right to free speech by being purposefully disrespectful and offensive about others' beliefs. When this happens, the opportunity for useful debate breaks down – neither side develops their understanding of the issue, and may well have upset or alienated the other person so they are now viewed as 'enemies'. For example, you can legitimately question why a religion follows certain rituals and codes of behaviour, but cannot aggressively mock, insult or spread hate about those beliefs when they do not harm you or wider society e.g. women's free choice to wear a hijab.

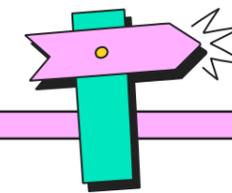
When discussing the concept of hate speech, students should understand that there are several laws designed to keep people safe from discrimination, as outlined in the Teacher Explanation. When considering why a person might post something hateful or abusive, students could reflect on the learning from previous lessons: for example, someone may have developed a belief based on stereotypes about a group, or due to false, misleading or biased information. This is especially true if they are socialising in an echo chamber that strengthens their view and leads them into 'us vs them' thinking.

On the other hand, some people may just be internet trolls or troublemakers, trying to create controversy for attention. Such individuals often exploit the fact they can be anonymous online, and may not even believe what they are posting – the aim is purely to spark a response, usually anger or offence, gain visibility for their content, or take out personal feelings of hurt on others. This kind of spam clogs up the internet and ruins the experience for those trying to have fun, share information, build

communities, and otherwise enjoy these platforms. We can all help limit this behaviour by (privately) calling out friends who we see 'trolling' others or making the internet a more stressful and hostile place. In these interactions, it is important to try and show empathy even to those behaving badly – accusations can often make people defensive or more determined to act out, so the object should not be to shame them, but rather to point out the real consequences of their actions.

The case studies to be handed out are as follows (see **Handout 5**):

**1. Someone shares a balanced news article asking whether terrorist fighters returning to the UK should be allowed back for trial, making points for and against. You read the article but then notice lots of racist comments underneath the post.** To consider the reliability of the information in this article and form their own opinion, students could draw on the media literacy skills they developed in previous lessons. They should recognise that the racist comments underneath the post are acts of hate speech, and should be reported to the platform immediately. If they know the people posting the racist comments, they could report them to other relevant authorities, including their parents, a school, or even the police. If these comments are not reported, those who posted them may not understand the comments are illegal, prejudiced and can cause real-world harm. If they are not reported for removal, a greater number of people will see and be hurt by them).



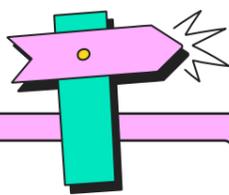
## TEACHER GUIDANCE (CONT.)

**2. You and a female friend are playing an online video game when another user starts posting abusive comments, saying that women are rubbish at gaming and should be kicked off the site.** Students should consider the impact this would have on a young woman who, as well as being upset and humiliated at that moment, may feel intimidated about gaming online in future. If repeated over time, comments like this may also cause the girl to suffer self-esteem issues and lose confidence in something she enjoys. Students might consider sticking up for this person, calling out the behaviour as sexist, or reporting the comment if that option is available. More broadly, students could recognise that this comment reflects an ignorant stereotype that continues to grow within the gaming community, and can spread to other areas of life. You could highlight to students that 33% of women report experiencing abuse from male gamers.

**3. In a private instant-messaging group, a video of another student is shared. They are not in the group but other members start mocking them with homophobic names based on their clothes and body language.** Students could acknowledge that just because a discussion takes place in private does not excuse discrimination. This type of behaviour may cause the group members to experience an echo chamber effect, where they believe it is acceptable to disrespect someone based on their perceived sexual orientation, simply because nobody else argues against it. Alternatively, members of the group may be offended but not feel comfortable speaking out. In this situation, students are encouraged to stand up for what is right. If they are talking in a group with friends they might

take a softer approach at first, calmly explaining why this attitude is harmful. They could find a video or post where someone discusses a personal experience of being bullied, to illustrate the real-world harm – especially if it's a public figure the group respects and follows. If this does not work, they could speak to their parents about it and ask them to intervene, or even raise it with teachers at school. Students could also leave the group if they feel that their concerns are not being listened to; this both removes them from taking part in the offensive discussion, and can send a message to their peers that the conversation is not acceptable.

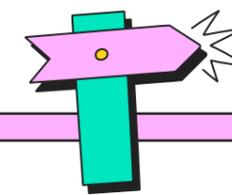
**4. You see a social media post linking to a news article that claims religious diversity is bad for society. The article is from a popular British tabloid and does not use directly abusive language about the religion or its followers.** Students should be encouraged to use their media literacy and critical thinking skills in this scenario. They could refer back to the previous lessons and consider: who is writing this, what do they want me to think, do I agree, what are others saying about this issue, what are the available facts, is this writer trying to manipulate the reader's viewpoint, and if so how? They might reflect that this writer is exercising his or her right to free speech but the article can still have consequences, for example people attacking minority religions and vandalising their places of worship, or encouraging a broader hatred for people who look or live differently. These groups may be blamed for bigger issues in society, and be made to feel unsafe or unwelcome as a result.



## TEACHER GUIDANCE (CONT.)

**5. Someone posts a short meme in which they show an image of a disabled person alongside comments designed to make fun of them. In the comments section, there are several people mocking those with disabilities,** as well as others standing up for people with disabilities. This type of content discriminates against people with disabilities in a hateful way, and has the potential to cause serious mental harm to an already vulnerable community. Students should recognise the need to report both the video itself and the subsequent comments. Students might consider that if content and comments like this go unreported then ignorant, unkind stereotypes of those with disabilities may develop, reducing people's empathy or understanding of different life experiences. Students may feel that reporting is not enough, and consider demonstrating additional traits of digital citizenship: they might share educational resources that outline why ableism is a form of social prejudice, and/or that tell stories of those affected by disability-based discrimination.

**6. You see a debate taking place in the comments section under an image of a footballer, about whether male or female players should be paid the same amount of money.** Students could apply their learning from the previous activity and consider what makes for a constructive debate. When deciding whether or not to engage themselves, they could reflect on whether they know enough about this topic to offer a wellinformed contribution. If not, they may want to get their facts straight first, rather than posting a knee-jerk comment based on an emotional reaction. They could also read through the comments to understand the tone of the debate. If it is reasonable and open-minded, they might feel more inclined to engage. However, if it is abusive and unkind they could ignore it entirely or report overtly hateful comments. With a topic like this, they might consider the feelings of those involved (e.g. women in sport) and put their opinion forward in a sensitive manner that does not intentionally seek to cause harm.



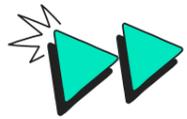
## TEACHER GUIDANCE (CONT.)

When recapping the ways to respond to online hate speech and abuse, it is important to emphasise the need for a safe approach and risk mitigation for themselves and others. These include the following principles:

- 1. Assess the situation before getting involved.** You can do this by asking several questions: can I positively influence the situation or should this be immediately flagged to the platform/an adult? Does getting involved pose a greater risk to me or the person I am defending?
- 2. If you do get involved, bring it up.** Again, only engage if you think something is potentially upsetting but does not merit being flagged to the platform or an adult. If you do get involved, keep it polite and don't fuel further aggression. This is only likely to worsen the situation and lead to more abuse, which could spill into more extreme retaliation (e.g. doxxing, trolling) or offline violence. Maintain a rational tone, sharing facts on why the person is mistaken or hurtful in what they are saying, or post a positive comment to support and show solidarity with the victim of the attack.

**3. Have an exit strategy.** Know when to exit a discussion online, recognising that it is no longer constructive. If it has become abusive, flag it to the platform or a responsible adult. Alternatively, you can stop responding to comments or messages, turn off notifications or log off entirely to limit your exposure to abuse and offensive content. It is OK to walk away and does not imply weakness.

## ▶ MAIN ACTIVITY 2 (20 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

- 1. S continue working in groups (either the same or new groups).**
- 2. Each group is given a set of cards (Handout 6) and must arrange the cards in a diamond shape in the order of agreement.** The statement at the top of the diamond will be the statement they most strongly agree with, while the bottom statement is the one they most strongly disagree with.
- 3. T takes feedback from each group,** asking for their top and bottom choices. Ask the next group if they agree or disagree, and continue to take feedback from each group. Use key questions (\*) to guide the discussion.
- 4. T draws attention to any statements which haven't been commented on.** T asks a group where they placed that statement and again takes feedback on whether other groups agree or disagree.



### KEY QUESTIONS

(\*)

- What similarities did you notice between the groups?
- What have most people prioritised and why?
- Does anyone disagree with the general consensus?

### TEACHER GUIDANCE

This activity enables students to reflect on their values about online communication. In ordering the statements, they will draw on prior learning from this and the previous lessons, to begin articulating their views on how to be a good digital citizen. There is no right or wrong order of statements, but the hierarchy should come after careful discussion among team members. This way, the activity provides an opportunity to work in groups and for students to communicate and rationalise their ideas to each other.

The statements are designed to be thought-provoking, and in most cases should lead to nuanced discussion rather than straightforward answers. An exception to this rule would be the statement: "The best way to respond to hurtful comments is with your own hurtful comments."

Students should recognise this as an unhelpful response in any situation. Students should consolidate their understanding of compassion in the online context, for example considering others' feelings when interacting with them or posting their own content with no particular audience in mind.

They should explain their reasons for ordering the statements in a certain way, while also making compromises with each other over the position of each statement.

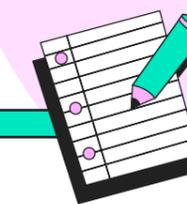
**Differentiation:** a smaller selection of statements could be provided for students who find processing nine opinions more challenging.

## ▶ PLENARY (10 MINUTES)

### 1. S complete the following 3,2,1 exit card (see Handout 7):

- 3 actions they could take to help challenge online hate and abuse.
- 2 measures to keep safe while taking these actions.
- 1 aspect of being a good digital citizen they still want to learn more about.

### 2. S should complete their reflective journals once they have finished the exit card.



## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

### 1. Class debates on the following motions:

- "Free speech should have no limits."
- "Hate speech does not count in a private group."
- "The best way to counter hate speech is to attack the author."
- "If social media removes a post, that counts as censorship."

### 2. Plan an assembly for a younger year group, in which students educate them on free speech and how to safely confront hate speech and abuse online.

# HANDOUTS

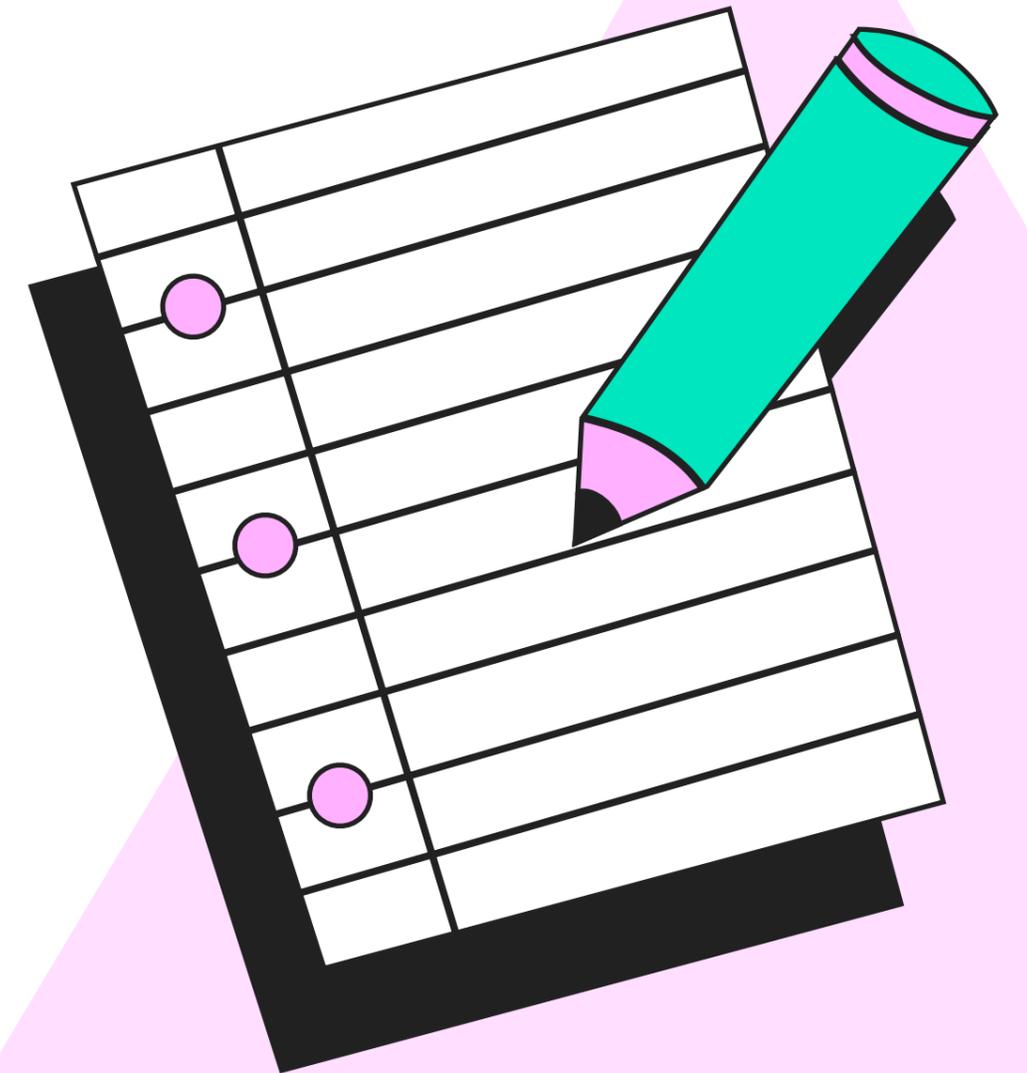
The following pages contain the supporting handouts to be photocopied and distributed to students.

**Handout 1** – Definition cards for free speech and hate speech

**Handout 5** – A series of case studies on controversial social media posts to be analysed

**Handout 6** – A list of statements to be photocopied, cut out and ordered

**Handout 7** – 'Exit Card' to capture key learnings



▶ HANDOUT 5

**SPEAKING UP, SPEAKING OUT  
CASE STUDIES**



**Someone shares a balanced news article asking whether terrorist fighters returning to the UK should be allowed back for trial, making points for and against. You read the article but then notice lots of racist comments underneath the post.**

▶ HANDOUT 5

**SPEAKING UP, SPEAKING OUT  
CASE STUDIES (CONT.)**



**In a private instant-messaging group, a video of another student is shared. They are not in the group but other members start mocking them with homophobic names based on their clothes and body language.**



**You and a female friend are playing an online video game when another user starts posting abusive comments, saying that women are rubbish at gaming and should be kicked off the site.**



**You see a social media post linking to a news article that claims religious diversity is bad for society. The article is from a popular British tabloid and does not use directly abusive language about the religion or its followers.**

▶ HANDOUT 5

**SPEAKING UP, SPEAKING OUT  
CASE STUDIES (CONT.)**

**Someone posts a meme featuring a disabled person, designed to make fun of them. In the comments section there are a number of people mocking those with disabilities, as well as others standing up for people with disabilities.**

**You see a debate taking place in the comments section under an image of a footballer, about whether male or female players should be paid the same amount of money.**

▶ HANDOUT 6

**FREE SPEECH/HATE SPEECH  
STATEMENTS**

**WE SHOULD DEMONSTRATE AN OPEN MIND AND KINDNESS IN EVERYTHING WE DO.**

**IF PEOPLE POST HORRIBLE THINGS, THEY DESERVE HORRIBLE THINGS IN RETURN.**

**IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO HANDLE CRITICISM, YOU SHOULDN'T BE ONLINE IN THE FIRST PLACE.**

**IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO EXPRESS YOUR OWN OPINIONS THAN TO WORRY ABOUT HURTING SOMEONE'S FEELINGS.**

**IF YOUR VIEWS DON'T ATTACK ANYONE'S BELIEFS, YOU SHOULD FEEL FREE TO SHARE THEM ONLINE.**

▶ **HANDOUT 6**

**FREE SPEECH/HATE SPEECH  
STATEMENTS (CONT.)**



**IT IS ACCEPTABLE TO CHALLENGE BELIEFS ONLINE, EVEN IF IT OFFENDS SOME PEOPLE.**



**WE SHOULD ALWAYS TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE HOLD VIEWS DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN.**



**IF WE IGNORE HATE, IT WILL GO AWAY.**



**IT'S NOT WORTH HAVING A DEBATE WITH SOMEONE ONLINE, YOU CAN NEVER CHANGE THEIR MIND.**

▶ **HANDOUT 7**

**SPEAKING UP, SPEAKING OUT EXIT CARD**

**BE INTERNET CITIZENS – CHALLENGING ONLINE HATE**

**3 actions** you could take to help challenge online hate and abuse:

- 
- 
- 

**2 measures** to keep safe while taking these actions:

- 
- 

**1 aspect** of being a good digital citizen you want to learn more about:

-

## LESSON 5

# BECOMING AN INTERNET CITIZEN



## LESSON 5

# BECOMING AN INTERNET CITIZEN

## LESSON PLAN



There is no time limit for this lesson; you should take as much time as necessary for students to produce and present their creative content.

### OVERVIEW

This final lesson allows students to showcase their learning from across the unit of work and encourages them to get creative with their own content. To deliver this lesson, teachers will need access to computers or tablets, printer and video recording equipment.

The first section asks students a series of questions to draw together the previous four lessons, including what it means to be a good digital citizen. Their responses should inform the next section, in which they can put their new knowledge of digital citizenship and creative skills into practice, producing content that champions positive action online.

Where relevant, students are encouraged to film what they create in this lesson, either on smartphones, tablets or other recording devices, providing a snapshot of how social media content is produced (e.g. YouTube videos). This content could be used in a number of different ways. For example, students might showcase their videos to other year groups in PSHE, computing or citizenship classes, or discuss them at year group assemblies.

**NB:** Filming should only occur where students and parents have given written consent, and any footage should be used and stored in line with your school's data protection policy.



### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- To understand what digital citizenship means and take actions to demonstrate it.



### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students have a personal and/or class definition of digital citizenship and what it involves (skills, behaviours, attitudes, knowledge).
2. Students can demonstrate increased confidence in their digital citizenship skills.
3. Students can articulate positive uses of the internet and how they might get involved.
4. Students can design online content that promotes their ideas in an inclusive, engaging and appropriate manner.
5. Students display creative presentational skills when communicating their ideas.



### HANDOUTS

- Handouts 8, 9, 10 and 11

# LESSON ACTIVITIES PLAN

## ▶ STARTER ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

1. **T displays PPT slide which poses the question:** *'What does a good digital citizen look like?'*
2. **In groups, S construct the ideal digital citizen** e.g. adjectives, personality traits, actions, skills. T supports by posing key questions (\*).
3. **T invites volunteers to share their ideas on the whiteboard.** Through this, S will collectively construct the attributes of a good digital citizen.
4. **T presents S with a definition of a digital citizen.** S analyse it and discuss how they might improve it, before settling on an agreed class definition.



### KEY QUESTIONS

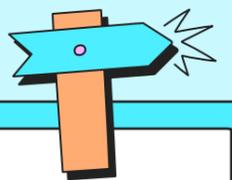
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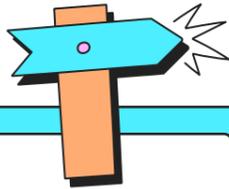
- How does a good digital citizen approach new information they find online?

### KEY QUESTIONS (CONT.)

- Where does a good digital citizen get and verify their information online?
- How do good digital citizens play a positive role in their online communities (e.g. a private instant messaging group, public page or posts on their profile)?
- How does a good digital citizen react when they see something provocative or emotive online?
- What attitudes does a good digital citizen demonstrate when interacting with others online?
- What actions might a good digital citizen take to improve interactions online?
- What actions might they take to contribute to solving real-world problems (e.g. joining/starting a campaign, sharing educational resources, signing a petition)?
- How would a good digital citizen respond when they see others being bullied, harassed or mocked unfairly?
- What would they do if a close friend or family member shared false, offensive or otherwise harmful information on social media?
- What would they do if a funny but suspicious meme was going viral in their friendship group?

Teacher guidance on the following page.





## TEACHER GUIDANCE

This starter activity enables students to reflect on previous lessons, recognising that the knowledge and skills they have learnt, and attitudes and behaviours they have developed, contribute to being a good digital citizen. The interactive nature helps students to co-construct their understanding of what it means to demonstrate positive and impactful digital citizenship. Through brainstorming together, groups should build a discussion around key ideas, before assimilating these as a whole class and arriving at an agreed vision of what a good digital citizen looks like.

Depending on the resources available, you or the students could produce a large visual representation of the ideal digital citizen to display in the classroom (e.g. have them draw around the outline of a classmate, then fill the cut-out with adjectives and descriptors). This would serve as an ongoing reminder for them of the traits they should strive to demonstrate online.

The key questions should be used to support students in considering the range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that good digital citizens demonstrate. These might include:

- Able to assess the credibility of information they see online.

- Responsive to the spread of dis- and misinformation, educating themselves and others where needed.
- Careful in what they consume, and considerate in what they post.
- Aware of the benefits and risks associated with filter bubbles and echo chambers.
- Capable of identifying bias in the media, and able to recognise their own biases.
- Willing to listen to other people's opinions and talk to them constructively, even when they disagree.
- Supportive of others online, calling out hate and bullying when they see it.
- Able to use their voice to spread positivity and empathy towards others.

Their definition could also include basic adjectives such as: **curious, open-minded, accountable, sensitive, aware, independent, self-regulating, proactive, responsible, engaging, ethical, deliberative.**

When discussing the responses as a class, encourage students to reflect on how their understanding of the internet has changed over the lessons, and how the behaviour they demonstrate offline should be reflected in their interactions on social media.

## ▶ MAIN ACTIVITY 1 (30 MINUTES)



### ACTIONS

- 1. S use computers and/or tablets to research examples of inspiring digital citizenship.** T provides key questions (\*) to help S get started.
- 2. S use key questions (\*\*)** displayed on PPT to support their research.
- 3. S present their findings to the class.** S can describe why their examples demonstrate positive digital citizenship, and listen to others' analysis of their examples.



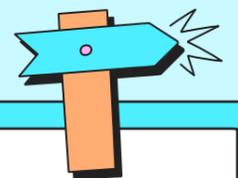
### KEY QUESTIONS

(\*)

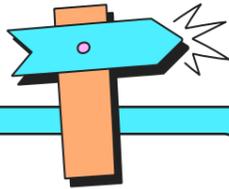
- Where have you seen people using the internet/ social media to promote a positive message?
- Where have you seen the internet used to provide a solution or push for change on an important issue?
- Which influencers do you admire? What do you like about what they say and how they say it?

(\*\*)

- What positive message is this person or group trying to promote (or which issue are they helping to resolve)?
- What platform and/or tools are they using to communicate their message? How do they make best use of the platform format?
- Have they enlisted the support of others? How did they encourage people to take part?
- How does viewing their content make you feel?
- What evidence is there for their success? e.g. have they helped to change things and how do you know?



Teacher guidance on the following page.



## TEACHER GUIDANCE

This activity enables students to identify positive role models in their own lives or digital communities. In addition to using the key questions (\*), you could highlight examples to get students thinking.

For example:

[kidsagainstplastic.co.uk](http://kidsagainstplastic.co.uk) – Two British teenagers started this campaign to raise awareness about plastic misuse and, via their website and hashtags, encourage young people to be more environmentally-conscious.

[#FridaysforFuture](https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/) – A movement started by Swedish teenager and activist Greta Thunberg to protest inaction on the climate crisis. She used social media platforms to promote the movement and sparked student activity in countries across the globe, reaching over 13 million people.

As with the previous activity, students could produce a visual representation of their research to display in the classroom. This might involve printing miniature cut-outs of the digital citizenship figures and campaigns they have researched, and collating these as an inspiration board.

## ▶ MAIN ACTIVITY 2 (NO TIME LIMIT)

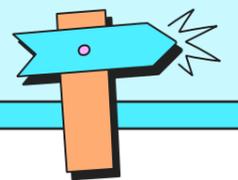


## ACTIONS

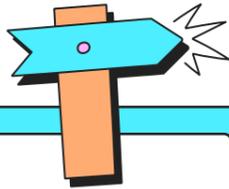
**1. T introduces the creative activity to S.** S will plan and produce content that demonstrates their understanding of digital citizenship and enables them to spread positivity online and/or support others in doing so. S could produce one of the following:

- A planned digital campaign or intention to join an existing movement focused on an important issue (e.g. anti-hate/bullying, environmental protection, community action, dis/misinformation).
- Offline content that reflects their learning about digital citizenship, including:
  - Video content delivering an inspiring message.
  - A speech or PPT presentation on digital citizenship to deliver to younger students.
  - A spoken word piece, poem or song about using the internet.

S could work in pairs, small groups or independently. The activity will require them to apply learnings from all previous lessons, as well as incorporating their answers from the previous activity.



Teacher guidance on the following page.



## TEACHER GUIDANCE

This activity is a chance for students to put their learning into practice. They can produce or plan content to improve their own and others' experience online, or advocate on issues of personal interest.

**a) For students who choose to plan or join a campaign,** the following documents could help provide structure:

Planning doc A (Handout 8) – joining existing campaigns

Planning doc B (Handout 9) – starting a new campaign

**NB.** More in-depth toolkits to guide students producing campaigns can be found below. These resources have not been quality assured by the PSHE Association:

- [ISD's Campaign Toolkit](#)
- British Library's 'Steps to Campaigning Success' [handbook](#)

**b) Students producing a video** could consider:

- Which issue is most important to them, either to share information with others and/or support the cause more broadly?
- What exactly do they want to say about this issue and why?
- Which platforms can be used to promote the cause?

**c) Students creating a presentation or speech** could include some of the following:

- An overview of what digital citizenship is and why it matters.
- Key takeaway facts about digital citizenship that are important to young people.
- Different examples of how the internet might inspire other young people including examples of positive online influencers.
- How young people can make their own contributions to an exciting and safe online environment.

**d) Students producing a poem or song** may also consider the points above.

This is a chance for students to be creative. Where possible, they should be encouraged to use any relevant equipment your school can provide to bring their ideas to life (e.g. graphic design software, instruments, arts and craft materials), as well as their own acting, musical or artistic skills.

## ▶ END OF SESSION



## ACTIONS

**1. If time allows, S present their content to the rest of the group.**

**2. S could offer constructive feedback on each presentation.** Use (\*) to guide the discussion.

**NB.** for those individuals or groups who wish to record their presentations, you will need to provide one of the following:

- Smart phones (students could use their own if organisation's policy allows)
- Tablets
- Other devices that could be used to record footage (e.g. handheld cameras)

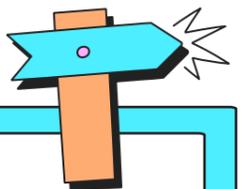
Filming should only occur where students and parents have given written consent, and any footage should be used and stored in line with your school's data protection policy.



## KEY QUESTIONS

(\*)

- What have you learnt from each presentation?
- Did you remember anything you had forgotten from previous lessons or did you learn something new?
- What are some positive behaviours you will demonstrate online in the future?
- What inspired you about your classmate's content?



## TEACHER GUIDANCE

Use this time to celebrate the creativity displayed through each presentation and to reflect on everything learnt across these lessons. Encourage students to share their digital citizenship skills and knowledge with their friends and family. Finally, provide them with **Handout 10** for possible resources to continue and expand their learning, and **Handout 11** to recognise their achievement in participating in the Be Internet Citizens programme.

# HANDOUTS

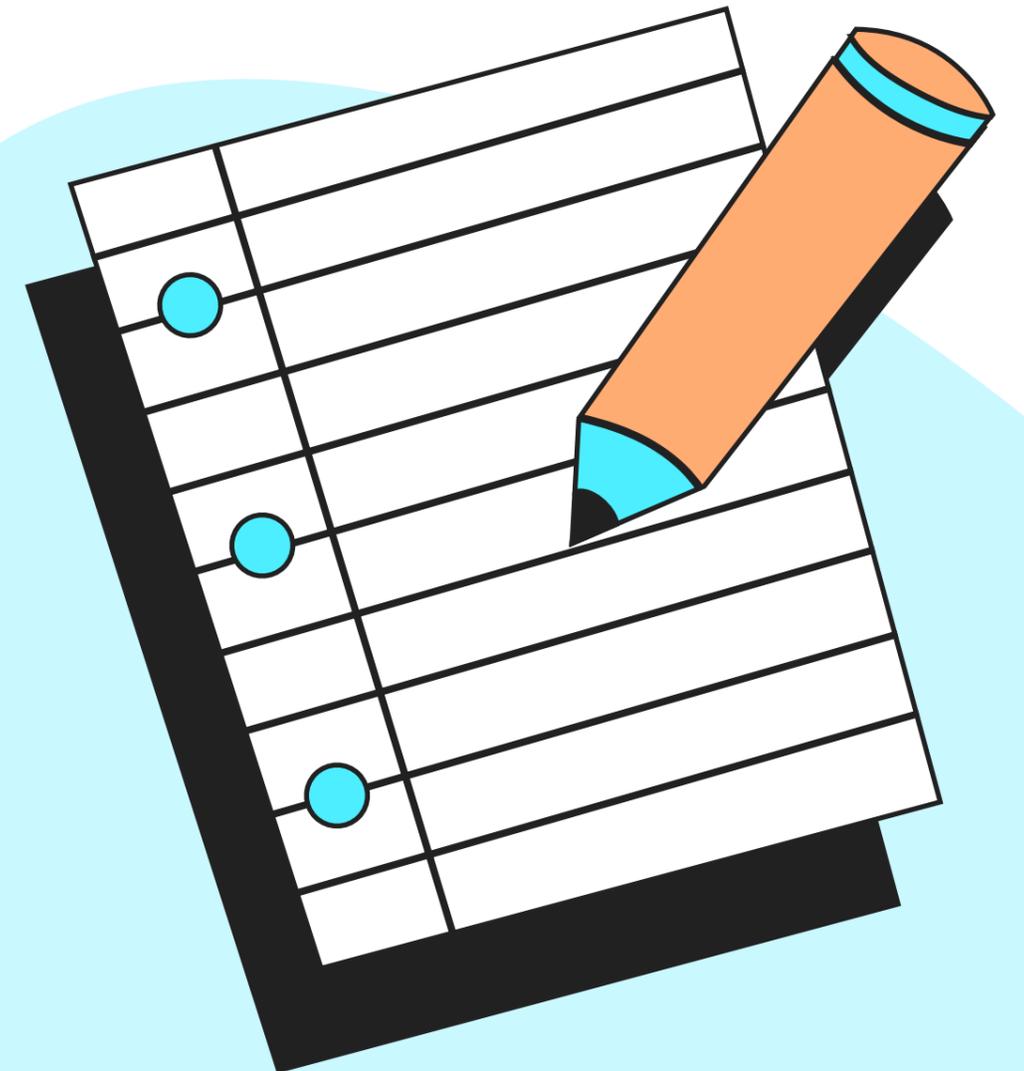
The following pages contain the supporting handouts to be photocopied and distributed to students.

**Handout 8** – A planning template for students wishing to join existing digital campaigns

**Handout 9** – A planning template for students wishing to create their own digital campaigns

**Handout 10** – A list of additional resources to help students develop their digital citizenship

**Handout 11** – A certificate awarded to students for completing the Unit of Work



▶ **HANDOUT 8**  
**CAMPAIGN PLANNING GRID A**

**KEY ISSUE:**

[Empty text box for key issue]

**THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ON THIS ISSUE:**

[Empty text box for thoughts and opinions]

**KEY MESSAGE TO SHARE:**

[Empty text box for key message]

▶ **HANDOUT 8**  
**CAMPAIGN PLANNING GRID A (CONT.)**

**HOW DO I WANT TO SUPPORT EXISTING CAMPAIGNS:**

[Empty text box for support methods]

**WHICH CAMPAIGNS AM I ALREADY AWARE OF:**

[Empty text box for awareness]

**WHERE CAN I FIND EXISTING CAMPAIGNS TO JOIN:**

[Empty text box for finding campaigns]

**NEXT STEPS:**

In the next week I will have:

In the next month I will have:

In the next year I will have:

**WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?**

For example, no. of people joining:

For example, no. of people liking our page:

For example, no. of people sharing our hashtag:

▶ **HANDOUT 9**  
**CAMPAIGN PLANNING GRID B**

**CAMPAIGN NAME:**

**SLOGAN:**

**ISSUE:**

**KEY MESSAGE:**

▶ **HANDOUT 9**  
**CAMPAIGN PLANNING GRID B (CONT.)**

**AUDIENCE:**

**HOW TO REACH THIS AUDIENCE:**

**HASHTAG:**

**NEXT STEPS:**

In the next week I will have:

In the next month I will have:

In the next year I will have:

**WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?**

For example, no. of people joining:

For example, no. of people liking our page:

For example, no. of people sharing our hashtag:

## ▶ HANDOUT 10

# ADDITIONAL DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Below is a list of resources for students to continue their digital citizenship journey at home.

They are presented in order of the Be Internet Citizens' key concepts (i.e. from disinformation to digital campaigns). The PSHE Association has not quality assured any of the sites or resources listed here.

RESOURCE	SUMMARY	SEARCH TERMS
<a href="#">BBC Bitesize Fact or Fake</a>	A range of articles and standalone activities on so-called fake news.	BBC bitesize fact or fake
<a href="#">BBC Young Reporter</a>	A project providing young people with the skills to create and understand media today.	BBC teach young reporter
<a href="#">Full Fact</a>	A fact-checking organisation, busting myths to establish the facts on important issues.	Full fact-checking
<a href="#">Newseum 'Is it Worth Sharing?' Flowchart</a>	Visual guidance to support your decision-making when it comes to sharing online content. (Note: you have to register for a free NewseumED account to download)	Newseum is this story share-worthy?
<a href="#">Poynter's MediaWise Project</a>	US-based digital literacy project with resources focused on navigating online information in a robust, critical way.	Poynter media wise
<a href="#">PC Mag UK: 'How to Spot Fake News Online'</a>	List of plug-ins to help internet users establish media bias on webpages and identify fake news.	PC mag spot fake news
<a href="#">Snopes</a>	A fact-checking website, used to research urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors, and misinformation.	Snopes fact check
<a href="#">BBC Bitesize Recognising Bias and Unreliability</a>	Helpful information on how to identify bias and how to decide how reliable a piece of writing is.	BBC bitesize bias
<a href="#">Official Media Bias Fact Check</a>	Free Chrome extension that highlights the political bias of news websites when users visit them.	Official media bias extension
<a href="#">BBC Bitesize: What is a filter bubble?</a>	Short video explaining filter bubbles and some top tips for 'bursting' your bubble.	BBC bitesize filter bubble
<a href="#">Report Harmful Content</a>	Online service to help young people report harmful content they see on social media.	Report harmful content
<a href="#">Safer Internet Centre: Advice Centre for Young People</a>	Fun games and activities to help young people enjoy the internet while staying safe online.	Safer internet centre advice
<a href="#">Ditch the Label</a>	A global youth organisation empowering action against bullying and promoting discussion on mental health and digital wellbeing. Includes research on issues affecting young people, support forums and self-help guides.	Ditch the label youth
<a href="#">International Society for Technology in Education - Digital Citizenship diagram</a>	Resources which visually describe ways in which young people can be good citizens for their communities, both on and offline.	ISTE digital citizenship
<a href="#">GCFGlobal YouTube video - 'Being a Good Digital Citizen'</a>	Short video explaining top tips to becoming a good digital citizen.	GCFGlobal digital citizen video

▶ HANDOUT 11  
DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATE

BE INTERNET  
CITIZENS

THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO



For completing the Be Internet Citizens unit of work – highlighting the media literacy and digital citizenship skills needed to be strong, heard and proud online.



BE INTERNET  
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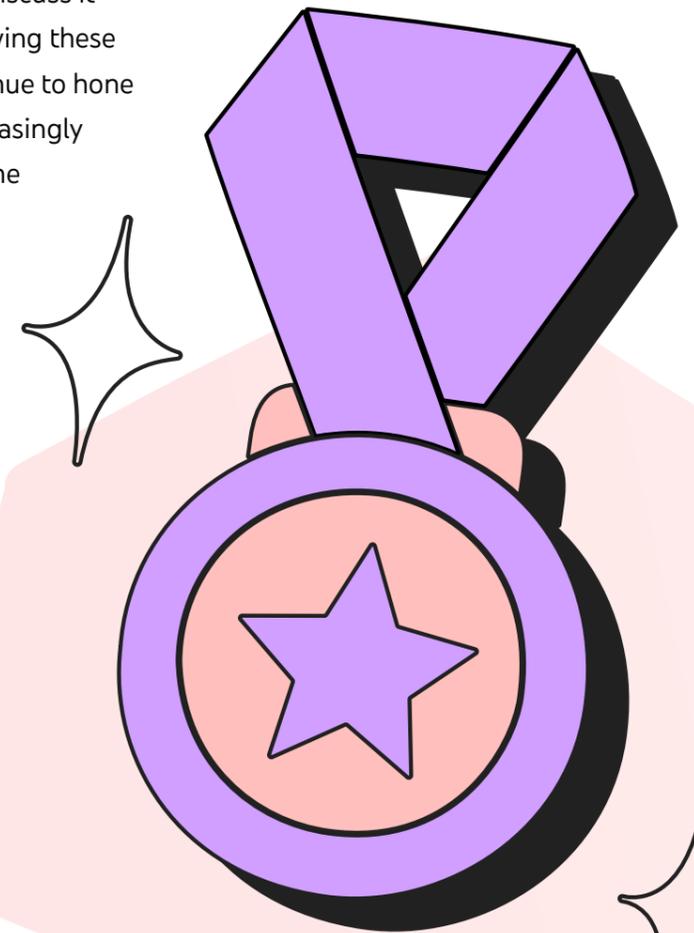
For completing the Be Internet Citizens unit of work – highlighting the media literacy and digital citizenship skills needed to be strong, heard and proud online.



# CONGRATULATIONS

You have now delivered the Be Internet Citizens unit of work to your students. Through the lessons you facilitated, they will have begun to develop the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours needed to play a positive role in their online communities, becoming more well-informed and responsible digital leaders.

While you may have finished these lessons, remember that the conversation can and should be ongoing. If you come across an interesting example of disinformation or a textbook case of biased writing, why not present it to students and see if they can still identify common traits, or analyse why it may be problematic? If a new feud breaks out in popular culture, why not discuss it through the lens of 'us versus them'? By reviving these discussions over time, participants will continue to hone their critical thinking skills, and become increasingly well-equipped to understand and navigate the digital world.





# BE INTERNET CITIZENS

If you have any questions regarding the content of this toolkit, or would like to find out more about the wider work of the Be Internet Citizens programme, please don't hesitate to email the following address:

**[beinternetcitizens@isdglobal.org](mailto:beinternetcitizens@isdglobal.org)**

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