

Webography

Media Literacy 101: <http://mediasmarts.ca/media-literacy-101>

Media are constructions: <http://bit.ly/21hJTME>

Viral videos:

Clam licking salt <http://bit.ly/1jkdcy2>

Scooter into sinkhole <http://bit.ly/2lbJNM0>

Weasel and hummingbird <http://bit.ly/1VVsnVJ>

Eagle grabs baby <http://bit.ly/2yJd6uc>

Stop-motion and pixilation:

Information: Once it's out there... <http://bit.ly/2AgFTEg>

Her Morning Elegance <https://vimeo.com/13781225>

Time capsules:

Steinbach Elementary School opens time capsule <https://globalnews.ca/news/1641090/steinbach-elementary-school-opens-time-capsule/>

Avatars and body image:

Lesson <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/avatars-body-image>

Avatar maker <http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/games/avatar-maker>

MediaSmarts website tour:

Digital literacy curriculum framework: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/use-understand-create-digital-literacy-framework-canadian-schools>

Resource finder: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/find-lesson>

Digital and media literacy outcomes by province and territory: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-and-media-literacy-outcomes-province-territory>

Licensed tutorials and PD workshops: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/licensed-resources>

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THE NEW 5 Ws

What makes a photo or a news story go viral? Research suggests that it's when something engages our emotions, surprises us, gives us a striking image or a personal connection to the story, and provokes our curiosity. Unfortunately, those same things also make us less likely to look critically at something – which means it's easy to be tricked by fake viral content.

So how can you know if something that's spreading is true?

Here's an update to the classic "5 Ws" that you can use.

WHEN should you double-check?

Research shows that students are **least** likely to fact-check news and other things that come to them through social networks like Facebook or Twitter, but these are their **most** common sources of news.

- You don't have to debunk **everything** that comes to you, though. Ask yourself these questions:
- Am I about to share, tag, retweet or forward this?
- Could someone base an important decision (about their health, their career, travel, etc.) on this?
- Is it about a hot or controversial issue?
- Does this seem "too good to be true"?

If the answer to **any** of those is "Yes", double-check it!

So HOW can you find out if something is real or not?

Ask these questions before you share or spread something:

WHAT kinds of fake content should I watch out for?

There are a lot of different kinds of fakes being spread around. Before you believe something (or share it), make sure it isn't one of these:

- **Jokes:** "Fake news" sites like The Onion and The Beaverton publish spoof news stories that look a lot like the real thing – sometimes *too* real, as many have been shared on social media by people who believed they were true.
- **Hoaxes:** The darker side of jokes are hoaxes that are spread on purpose to mislead people. Sometimes these are motivated by various kinds of prejudice; other times they're just done out of malice.
- **Scams:** Sometimes the purpose of a fake is to separate you from your money, to get you to give up your personal information, or to get you to click on a link that will download malware onto your computer.
- **Ads:** Advertisers know that viral content is one of the best ways to get their messages to young people. Some things that are spread around are obviously ads, but others are disguised as "real" content. As with jokes, ads can also be spread by people who don't realize they're ads.

WHY is it being spread around? Is it trying to sell something? To scare you? To make you laugh? To make you angry? Does it use **emotionally-loaded words or images** to get a rise out of you?



WHO is spreading it? Do they have a good track record for accuracy?

Track it back to the *original* poster. If the person who shared it with you didn't give a source, do a search for it. But **don't** assume that a newspaper, TV network or online news source is the original source – they often run stories that came to **them** over social media, sometimes without doing enough fact checking.

Once you've found the source, find out who they are and why they might be a valid source for what they're spreading:

- If it's a science or health story, are they a real expert? Do a search on their name and see what comes up.
- If it's a photo of something that's happening in a particular place, do they really live there?
- Have they posted on this subject before? If not, be cautious.
- Do they post a lot of spreadable stuff? If so, be cautious.

You can also look at the source's **network**. Are they connected mostly to:

- People and groups who all have similar opinions?
- Advertisers?
- People and groups who have no connection to the thing they're spreading?
- Nobody?

If the answer to any of those is "Yes", be cautious.

WHEN did it start spreading? A lot of things get spread more than once, like some of the photos of flooding that go around every time there's a big storm. Do a search like "shark subway station" to see if it's been around before.

How long has the original poster's account been around? If an account is new, be cautious.

And don't forget to be extra-careful about anything that's posted on April 1st!

WHERE else can I find out if something is real?

- Do a search for the subject with the words "hoax" or "scam", as in "shark subway station hoax"
- For pictures, you can do a search at TinEye (www.tineye.com). That will tell you where else the picture has appeared, and also show you *similar* pictures (which is a good way to find out if a picture has been photoshopped.) TinEye can also be installed as a browser plugin, so you can check a picture just by right-clicking it.
- Search hoax-busting sites like Snopes. You can go to www.snopes.com or do a site search, like this: "shark subway station site:www.snopes.com"



SIDE A**Scenario 1**

Ella likes to play with Sky Giants, action figures that come with codes that let you control that character in the Sky Giants virtual world. One afternoon while playing with her friends online she sees that Oscar, a classmate of hers, is being teased for playing a female giant called Valorica. She and Oscar aren't really close friends but Ella doesn't like to see anybody being bullied, so she tells the other players to leave Oscar alone and that there's nothing wrong with playing a female character – it's just a game, after all. To her surprise, though, Oscar gets mad and tells Ella to leave him alone.

- How would you feel if you were Ella?
- What would you do to resolve this situation?
- Who would be affected by what you do?

Scenario 2:

Maria is checking her social networking page when she notices that she's getting a lot of weird comments on a photo that's been tagged with her name:

"Nice hair"

"Tintin lives"

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!"

She finds out that her friend Jennifer posted a photo of the two of them in which Maria's hair is standing up in the front. Maria doesn't even remember when the picture was taken and she definitely didn't want it to be posted! She feels especially mad because she doesn't know of any reason why Jennifer would be so mean to her.

- How would you feel if you were Maria?
- What would you do to resolve this situation?
- Who would be affected by what you do?



SIDE B

Scenario 1

All of Oscar's friends have Sky Giants, but his mother says she just can't afford to buy him such an expensive toy. One day his mother brings home a surprise: someone she works with has a daughter who quit playing Sky Giants and gave away her Valorica figure. Oscar's friends tease him a lot when they play, but it's better than not playing at all. He makes a joke out of it because he doesn't want his friends to know his mother couldn't afford to buy him a new Sky Giant toy. One day Ella, a girl from his class that he doesn't usually play with, starts yelling at his friends to stop bullying him. He doesn't want to have to explain why he plays Valorica. It's so embarrassing!

- How would you feel if you were Oscar?
- What would you do to resolve this situation?
- Who would be affected by what you do?
- Does this change how you felt about this story when you heard it from Ella's point of view?

Scenario 2:

Jennifer is looking at the pictures she took on her phone and deciding which ones to post. She finds one of herself that she thinks looks really good but her friend Maria is also in it, with her hair standing up in a way that makes her look silly. She knows that Maria will be upset if anyone they know sees the picture. Because she and Maria have a lot of the same friends, she knows that if she posts it people will see Maria in it and tag it with her name so that everyone she knows will see it. If Jennifer doesn't post it, though, none of her friends will see it.

- How would you feel if you were Jennifer?
- What would you do to resolve this situation?
- Who would be affected by what you do?
- Does this change how you felt about this story when you heard it from Maria's point of view?



Here are some tips to help youth avoid empathy traps online:

- Remember that the people we talk to and play with online are real people. Even if you don't know them offline, try to imagine a person sitting next to you before you say or type anything.
- Don't respond right away. When something happens that gets you upset, take some time to let the first rush of anger or fear fade away.
- If you can, talk things out in person rather than online. Remember that other people can't tell how *you're* feeling online either, so it's easy for drama to blow up.
- Talk to your friends and family about how you're feeling. Kids consistently say that just having someone listen to them is one of the most effective ways of dealing with online conflict . If you can't talk to someone you know, you can turn to helplines like Kids Help Phone (www.kidshelpphone.ca).
- Don't ask your friends/posse to back you up. Research suggests that getting the same message over and over again – even if it's from your friends taking your side in an argument – can make angry feelings a lot more intense . It can also make the drama spread and turn into a much bigger conflict.
- Keep an eye on how *you're* feeling! It's hard to make good decisions when you're mad, scared or embarrassed. If your heart is racing or you're feeling tense, it's time to get offline for a while.

