# Digital Literacy and Cyber Security

## Class 6-8

## Topic 3. "How to Recognize Fake News and Online Scams"

**Let's hear one Story**



Aryan is  a 13-year-old who loves chatting with his friends and browsing the internet. One evening, Aryan received a message on social media claiming, "Congratulations! You've won a free iPhone! Click here to claim it." The message had a countdown timer, saying he had only five minutes to respond, so Aryan quickly clicked the link and entered his name, phone number, and email.

The next day, Aryan noticed that strange messages were being sent from his account to his friends, telling them to click on a similar link. Aryan realized that something was wrong. By clicking on the link and sharing his information, he may have fallen for a scam that gained access to his social media account.

**Discussion Points**:

1.   What clues could Aryan have noticed that indicated this was a scam?

2. Why might someone want to trick Aryan and get access to his information?

This story introduces us to the importance of identifying fake messages and scams online.

The internet is an abundant source of information, yet it is crucial to recognize that not all of it is accurate or secure. The rise of fake news and online scams is a pressing issue that impacts everyone who spends time online. In this lesson, we will examine the concept of fake news, understand why it spreads, and learn how to effectively distinguish between credible and false information. Furthermore, we will identify common online scams and develop proactive strategies to protect ourselves from these threats. By actively participating in today's lesson, you will empower yourself with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape confidently and safely. Let's dive in and take control of our online experience!

**Lesson Objectives**:

- **Understand the concept of fake news** and why people spread it.
- **Identify reliable sources** of information and differentiate them from unreliable sources.
- **Recognize and avoid common types of online scams** by spotting red flags.
- **Practice responsible digital citizenship** by being mindful about sharing information online.

These skills will help us stay safe and responsible online, ensuring that we don't fall for misinformation or scams.

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**What Does Research says**

Insights from Ofcom
- 32% of 8-17-year-olds believe that all or most of what they see on social media is true.
- 70% of 12-17s said they were confident they could judge whether something was real or fake.
- Nearly a quarter of those children were unable to do so in practise.

This mismatch between confidence and ability could leave these children exposed to harm.

On a more positive point, of those who said they were confident, 48% were also able.

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**The Rumor Game/ Chinese whispers**

Students, you must have played the game of Chinese whispers. Let's play this game again .This game will help us understand how quickly information can get distorted when it is passed from person to person, similar to how misinformation spreads online.

**Objective**: To show how easily information can be altered or misinterpreted, which is often how fake news spreads.

**Instructions**:

1. Arrange the students in a circle.
2. Whisper a simple message to the first student in the circle. They should then whisper it to the next student, and so on, until the last student.
3. When the message reaches the last student, they say it aloud for the class to hear.

**Example Message**: "The library will have a free book giveaway for all students tomorrow at noon. Kindly deposit Rs.100 to buy a coupon to participate in this giveaway"

**Discussion Questions**:

1. How did the message change from the original?
2. What does this tell us about how information can become distorted?

**Takeaway**: This activity demonstrates that information can quickly become distorted as it spreads, just like rumors or fake news. That's why verifying information is essential before sharing it with others.

Let's learn more about how we can recognize these tricks to protect ourselves.

**Understanding Fake News**

Fake news is intentionally false or misleading information that is created and spread to deceive people. It can appear in articles, social media posts, or even forwarded messages on apps. Fake news can have significant consequences, influencing people's opinions, creating unnecessary panic, and even damaging reputations.

**Reasons Why Fake News Exists**



1. **Financial Gain**: Some websites create shocking or sensational news to attract more visitors, which earns them more money from advertisers.
   - o **Example**: A fake news website might publish an exaggerated health claim to attract clicks and advertising revenue.
2. **Influence and Manipulation**: Some groups or individuals create fake news to sway public opinion, particularly during elections or important events.
   - o **Example**: Fake political news stories created to make a candidate look bad can affect how people vote.
3. **Entertainment or Pranks**: Sometimes, fake news is spread for fun or as a prank, but it can still cause confusion or harm.

- **Example**: A post about an imaginary "alien invasion" may seem like a joke, but it can mislead and scare people who believe it.

**How to Spot Fake News**

Spotting fake news requires critical thinking. Here's a checklist students can use to evaluate whether a piece of information is likely to be true or false:

**Who is the Author?**

**Check Multiple Sources**

**Examine the Date**

**Fact-Checking Websites**

1. **Who is the Author?**: Does the author have expertise in the topic? Are they a trusted journalist or a professional in that field?
   - *Example*: An article about health should ideally be written by a healthcare expert, not an anonymous person or a random website.
2. **Check Multiple Sources**: Look for the same information on other trusted websites. If only one place reports it, it may be unverified.
   - *Example*: A story about a "new dinosaur species" should appear on major science news sites if it's true.
3. **Examine the Date**: Sometimes, outdated stories resurface as if they're new. Always check the date to see if the information is current and relevant.
4. **Fact-Checking Websites**: Use websites like Snopes, FactCheck.org, or Alt News in India to verify news stories that seem suspicious.

**Practice Activity: Real or Fake?**

**Objective**: To practice using the checklist to identify real vs. fake news.

1. Present students with sample headlines (both real and fake), and have them work in pairs to analyze each one using the checklist.
   - **Headline Examples**:
     - "Aliens found living under the ocean!" (Fake)
     - "Scientists discover new planet in our solar system." (Real if verified by credible sources)
     - "Eating chocolate three times a day cures all illnesses." (Likely fake)
2. Ask each pair to decide if the headline is likely real or fake and to explain their reasoning. Each pair can share their analysis with the class.

**Reflection**:

- Discuss how it felt to analyze these headlines. Was it easy to identify the fake ones? Why or why not?

## Recognizing Credible Sources

Not all sources are reliable. Some websites and social media posts look trustworthy but may contain false information. Learning to recognize credible sources is essential for staying informed.

### Identifying Reliable vs. Unreliable Sources

- **Credible Sources**: Well-known news websites (BBC, The Hindu), official government websites (.gov), educational websites (.edu), and peer-reviewed research journals (e.g., Science, Nature).
- **Unreliable Sources**: Websites with sensational headlines, anonymous blogs, and social media posts from unverified accounts.

| Source | Link | Type | Author Expertise | Reputation | Domain Type |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The New York Times | nytimes.com | News Article | Well-established journalists with experience | Highly reputable newspaper with fact-checking standards | .com |
| Wikipedia | wikipedia.org | Online Encyclopedia | Articles can be edited by anyone | Useful for general knowledge but not always reliable | .org |
| National Geographic | nationalgeographic.com | Magazine Article | Articles written by experts in various fields | High reputation for scientific accuracy and storytelling | .com |
| Medium | medium.com | Blog Platform | Varies; anyone can publish | Mixed; can have both credible and non-credible authors | .com |
| Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) | cdc.gov | Government Health Resource | Written by public health experts and researchers | Highly reputable for health-related information | .gov |
| The Conversation | theconversation.com | Academic Commentary | Articles written by academics and researchers | Generally reliable; peer-reviewed contributions | .com |
| BuzzFeed News | buzzfeednews.com | News Article | Varies; some trained journalists, others not | Known for entertainment and viral content; credibility varies | .com |
| ResearchGate | researchgate.net | Academic Networking Site | Researchers share their papers; authors are often experts | Useful for academic references but | .net |

| | | | | requires critical evaluation | |
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**Activity: Source Evaluation**

1. Provide students with a mix of website links or article excerpts.
2. Ask them to work in groups to evaluate each source based on criteria for credibility, such as author expertise, reputation, and domain type.

**Discussion**:

- How did students decide which sources were credible?
- Were there any sources that seemed trustworthy at first but weren't?

**Understanding Online Scams**

Online scams are tricks used by scammers to steal personal information or money. Scammers often disguise their messages to look like they're from trusted sources.

**Common Types of Online Scams**

1. **Phishing Scams**: These scams involve fake emails or messages that seem to be from real companies, asking for personal information.
   - o *Example*: An email claiming to be from a bank asking you to click a link to verify your account details.
2. **Fake Shopping Websites**: These sites offer products at very low prices, but after paying, you either receive nothing or a poor-quality product.
   - o *Example*: A website selling high-end smartphones for a fraction of the usual price with no customer service.
3. **Lottery or Prize Scams**: Messages that say you've won a prize but require a "processing fee" or your details to claim it.
   - o *Example*: A message saying, "Congratulations! You've won Rs.10,000. Just pay Rs.50 to claim your prize."

**Signs of a Scam**

To recognize a scam, watch for these red flags:

1. **Too Good to Be True**: If something sounds too good to be true,

2. **Requests for Personal Information**: Legitimate companies rarely ask for sensitive information over email or social media.

3. **Urgent Language**: Scammers often use phrases like "Act now or lose your prize!" to pressure people into acting quickly without thinking.

**Activity: Scam Spotting Role-Play**

**Objective**: To help students practice recognizing scams by role-playing.

1. **Instructions**:
   - Divide students into pairs.
   - One student plays the scammer, and the other plays the potential victim.
   - The "scammer" tries to convince the "victim" to share personal details using common scam tactics (e.g., offering a prize or posing as a trusted company).

2. **Example Role-Play**:
   - Scammer: "Hey, I'm from your bank. We need you to confirm your PIN to keep your account active."
   - Victim: "I won't share my PIN. I'll call my bank directly to confirm."

3. **Reflection**:
   - Discuss how students felt during the activity.
   - Reinforce why it's essential to be cautious when sharing information online.

**Problem-Solving Focus: Building Awareness**



Now that we understand how to identify fake news and online scams, let's brainstorm solutions that could help make the internet safer for everyone.

**Brainstorming Solutions**

**Fake News Checker App**: Imagine an app that helps you verify news with just a click.

Can you think of how to build this app

Or If you have any other idea for this ?


Videos Links:

[How to help kids spot fake news and misinformation | Internet Matters](#)

[THINK Before you share](#)