

# Trust

This section has been developed to: help generate discussions about the trustworthiness of content and contact online; to help develop critical thinking skills; and to explore indicators for trust to consider if what we see is and who we communicate with online are trustworthy.



## Trust online

Whilst online we can encounter a vast amount of information, photos, videos and messages from others. However, deciphering what we can trust, and recognising content which has been edited or contact which isn't trustworthy, can be challenging. When engaging with others online and the content they have shared it is important to consider who they are, what their motives might be and if any key indicators of trust are missing.

Misleading or edited content can be easily shared online both intentionally and unintentionally. However, the impact it can have on the person engaging with it is important as it could lead them to feel worried, upset, confused or develop a false perception of trust.



## Critical thinking online

Critical thinking is a skill which we use every day, often without consciously realising. It allows us to engage with content, people, thoughts and ideas whilst asking questions and forming judgements. Critical thinking involves applying key indicators of trust to a situation in order to gauge whether it is trustworthy.

Being a critical thinker doesn't mean rejecting all information or contact you encounter; it merely means not accepting it immediately at face value. Instead, you should think critically about what is in front of you or on your screen, weighing up what you know to be true and what is written and checking with others if you are unclear.

Critical thinking has become an important skill to be used whilst navigating the online world as we can see and engage with a multitude of content all at once. However, it is a skill which needs developing, strengthening and nurturing in order to be used effectively.



## Challenges for young people with additional needs

The internet can be a great platform for young people to find out information or simply engage with content they enjoy and find interesting. However, understanding the motives behind why someone has shared something or made contact can be challenging. Being duped by misleading content and contact online is a challenge for everyone but those with additional needs may find the concept of trust and motivations particularly difficult to navigate online. Autistic young people, in particular, tend to be very trusting of others and literal in their understanding of the things which they see and hear.

The internet comes with an added ambiguity that there is no hard and fast rule that will work for every situation. There are key indicators of trust which can be explored and considered when navigating online situations, but these may not always present themselves in an obvious way. Often, we must assess the situation for ourselves, check the information we are seeing and discuss our online experiences with others in order to rate the overall level of trustworthiness.



## What content and contact can be misleading online?

### Content shared which is incorrect, out of date, sensationalised or deliberately misleading

There can be many examples of this type of content online, including everything from news stories people share without having all the facts, to factual websites which haven't been updated as new information is found. Some content is deliberately shared online in order to mislead people, such as propaganda, fake news, some advertising, and extreme content.

### Content with a price tag

Sometimes it can be hard to tell if something will cost real money online or if it is actually an advert or sponsored content.

### Content which has been edited

Much of the content we see online will have been edited before it is posted. Sometimes this can be easy to spot but with the introduction of photoshopping apps it is becoming increasingly more challenging. Content can be edited by cropping, using filters, altering part of the image to change someone's appearance or body shape and even to make someone appear to be in a different location.

### Fact vs fake

Online everyone can share their opinion but all too often these can be shared in a very authoritative way which can make them appear to be facts. Fact checking websites like **Snopes** and **Full Fact** can be useful tools to make sure you have trustworthy information.

### Contact from people we only know online

Not everyone we speak to online will have bad intentions, but it can be difficult to know for sure if someone is who they say they are and what their motive for contact might be. Due to the added anonymity the online world brings, it can be very easy for someone to mask their true identity or intentions and create a false perception of trust.



## What are the reporting routes for unwanted contact online?



If you are ever concerned that someone is acting inappropriately towards a child online or suspect sexual grooming may be taking place, then you can report this to **CEOP**. There is more information found at **[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)**.

If appropriate for the understanding of your young people, share the CEOP reporting website for young people with them (**[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)**) and explain that CEOP are specialist police officers and part of the National Crime Agency.

Their job is to keep young people safe online and you can make a report to them if someone online:

- Pressures you to share personal information about yourself or others.
- Asks you to meet up with them or someone else in the offline world, e.g. at a café or park.
- Asks you to send images or videos of yourself or others.



## What are the key indicators of trust?

Whilst deciphering trust of online content and contact isn't an exact science, there are some clues to look out for. If some or all of the following indicators of trust are missing from something you see or someone you speak to online then this could show untrustworthiness.

The best way to know if you have trustworthy online content and contact is to check with other sources and talk to the people around you, as well as putting your critical thinking skills to the test and using the following indicators.

## Clues to know whether something is trustworthy online...

- ✓ **Check the information is coming from where you expected.**  
Is the website address (URL), email address or social media account from who you expected it to be?
- ✓ **Check you have heard of the organisation or person before.**  
If an organisation you have never heard of before posts something online then it's hard to know whether to trust them. Check with other people if they have heard of this organisation before and if not then don't just trust what it says, make sure you check the information.
- ✓ **Check the information you're reading can be trusted.**  
Is the information about what you expected, and can you find it on other websites as well?
- ✓ **Check if other people think it can be trusted.** Most online news stories and social media posts will have comments or reviews underneath them and if the information cannot be trusted then people will often comment saying that. You can also check by asking people you know and trust what they think.
- ✓ **Compare with what you already know.**  
Sometimes we can read things online which make us question what we already know. It's great to learn new things but trust yourself if something doesn't sound right.
- ✓ **Check when it was posted online.**  
Sometimes the things we read online can be out of date or old news stories which people have shared again.
- ✓ **Be careful with pop ups and competitions.**  
If something appears on your screen without you looking for it or says you have won a competition, then ignore it and click the red cross to get rid of it.

## Clues to know whether someone is trustworthy online...

- ✓ **Ask yourself...have I met this person before?**  
If not, then this person is a stranger.
- ✓ **Ask yourself...are they who they say they are?**  
If someone says they go to your school or know someone you know then always check first with a trusted adult or by asking your friend.
- ✓ **Ask yourself...what are they promising or asking me?**  
If they are asking you to do something like meet up or share personal information or images and videos, then tell a trusted adult.
- ✓ **Ask yourself...are they putting pressure on me?**  
A good friend will never pressurise you into doing something you don't want to do. It's important to tell a trusted adult if this ever happens online.
- ✓ **Ask yourself...should I do this just because someone else has?**  
Just because someone else does something online like sending a picture of themselves, it doesn't mean you have to do this as well.
- ✓ **Ask yourself...do I have to reply to a message from someone I don't know?**  
If you get a message or request from someone new or that you weren't expecting then you can ignore it, block and report. You don't have to reply or accept the request.
- ✓ **Ask yourself... are these images or videos edited?**  
Lots of people edit their images and videos online and this can make them look different or their lives appear to be perfect.

