

## Lesson 1: Content - Can you trust everything you see/read online?

**Target audience:** KS3 (11-14 year olds)

**Lesson aim:** To encourage young people to think critically about the information they see online as it may not be true or trustworthy

### Learning objectives:

- Students can understand the concept of critical thinking and apply it to examples online
- Students can recognise some of the differences between fact and opinion
- Students can think of ways to evaluate what is trustworthy online

<b>Timing:</b>	40-45 minute lesson	<b>Key words:</b>	critical thinking, fact, opinion, trust, agenda, motive
<b>Resources:</b>	PowerPoint presentation, worksheets, A4 paper	<b>Preparation:</b>	Photocopy worksheets, familiarise yourself with the recommended reading.

### Lesson outline

Lesson outline	Description	Resources	Class set up	Timing
<b>Key vocabulary preparation</b>	Defining 'critical thinking', 'trust' and 'hidden agenda'	Slides 3-4	Whole class	5 mins - Not included in timings
<b>Starter</b>	Trust online – Trust or trash?	Slides 5-8	Whole class	5 mins
<b>Activity 1</b>	Exploring online content examples (fictional and real)	Slides 9-12 <b>Appendix 1</b>	Pair work	10 mins
<b>Activity 2</b>	Exploring a fictional social networking feed	Slides 13-14 <b>Appendix 2</b>	Group work	8 mins
<b>Activity 3</b>	Fact vs. opinion?	Slide 15-17 <b>Appendix 3</b>	Group work	7 mins
<b>Activity 4</b>	Generating a checklist	Slides 18-22 A4 sheets per group	Group work	10 mins
<b>Plenary</b>	Top tips	Slide 23-24	Whole class	5 mins

**Before you begin**

It is important to establish a safe learning environment that students feel comfortable and able to participate in. You may wish to review your seating plan and set clear ground rules for the sessions. More information and guidance on this can be found in the Teachers Guidance document on page 3.

**Key vocabulary preparation**

Ask the class to explain what they understand by the words **critical thinking**, **'trust'** and **'hidden agenda'**. Under each word on the slide, you can type in the words or definitions that come to the students' mind. Prompt them with the definitions below if they require any support. (Slides 3-4)

**Key definitions**

**Cambridge English Dictionary** defines **critical thinking** (n) as 'the process of thinking carefully about a subject or idea, without allowing feelings or opinions to affect you'

**Cambridge English Dictionary** defines **trust** (v): 'to believe something is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable'. As a noun, it is defined as 'the belief that you can trust someone or something'

**Cambridge English Dictionary** defines **hidden agenda** (n) as: 'a secret reason for doing something'

**Starter: Trust online – Trust or trash?**

5 minutes

Begin by discussing how the students use social media, apps and the internet to engage with online content. Which are their favourite apps to do this on and why? (Slide 5).

**Assessing prior knowledge and existing strategies**

On the next slide, (Slide 6) you will begin by asking them if they can trust everything they read online or if the information they see could be 'trashed'. This provides you with an opportunity to assess your student's prior understanding of reliable information online and any strategies they may already have for deciphering trustworthy content.

By clicking through the slides you will reveal different types of online content for the students to decide whether or not they are trustworthy. You may wish to ask the students to vote on the most reliable source of information for current news, facts, information on an event etc. If they say they can't trust information online, ask them 'why?'

Following the discussion, ask them if all **images** online are realistic and trustworthy (Slide 7). You may wish to get students to vote on this or offer a percentage for the amount of trustworthy images there are online. Show them Slide 8 and ask them if they believe what they see. If they don't, what do they find unrealistic?

Some points to consider:

- What has been changed/altered/manipulated about these images? (NB. The colours of the beach image have been enhanced through Photoshop or filters)
- Why might these images have been changed/altered?
- Is it possible for a video to be viewed just over -2 billion times? (NB. Gangnam Style was actually viewed so many times online that it temporarily broke the YouTube counter and it appeared to count in negative numbers)

### Activity 1: Follyoaks examples & Google search examples

10 minutes

#### Ranking for reliability

Divide the class into pairs and hand out [Appendix 1](#) to each pair. Explain they need to rank these 4 sources of information and decide which they think is the most trustworthy ([Slide 9](#)). Which source gives the best and most accurate account on what Follyoaks is like? ([Slide 10](#)) The discussion points on the sheet will help them decide which source of information seems more trustworthy.

Discuss with the class **how** they would decipher if they could trust information online. Key questions could include:

- **Which websites do we trust and why?**  
*Suggested answers:* websites that look professional, websites from trusted brands (BBC, ASOS), up-to-date information
- **What helps us to trust information online?**  
*Suggested answers:* endorsement from famous people, up-to-date information, a professional looking website, images, ways to contact, from a reputable source
- **How do we really know if something is true or not?**  
*Suggested answers:* it is difficult, but we can think critically about it, weigh up what is said and what we already know and make an informed decision

**Supporting students with additional needs:** You may wish to provide the students with example scenarios for them to rank the 4 examples in terms of reliability, eg I want to find out where the local café is, I want to find out how to get to Follyoaks etc.

Feed back to the class ([slide 10](#)). With a show of hands, which website or source of information seemed the most trustworthy? Why?

In your discussion, explain that it is important to think critically about the information you see online as all four of these pieces of information are not real and have been created for the purposes of this resource. Make use of the below information if questioned by young people.

- Online content (websites/images/video) that use the word 'official' for a product or company might be deemed to be more trustworthy (e.g. Follyoaks official website). This could be true in some cases, but remind students that it is very easy to find logos or professional looking website templates online and use them on your own work. Emphasise that using logos, or the word 'official' doesn't necessarily mean that something is a genuine product! Other factors have to be considered e.g. the source of the content and whether you can tell who actually created it or who the author is.
- Blogs and social media posts are more likely to convey opinions and views rather than facts. Although it can be good to read from someone who has visited Follyoaks, it is important to remember that this is only their experience or opinion and therefore it can be biased. In the blog, Sarah is new to Follyoaks; she may not have seen everything there is on offer. In the tweet, Becca Hammer writes of her negative experience at a café, but thinking critically, do we know who Becca is? She could be the owner of a rival café shop in Follyoaks with a hidden agenda.
- Do you think the simplistic look of the 'Welcome to Follyoaks' website might influence the young people not to trust it? This website doesn't have a lot of information on it and has only chosen to write about 4 areas. It also only has 5 views of the website – does this affect how reliable a website is?

#### Search engines ranking

**Thinking critically** about what you see online

Next, ask them to look at **slides 11-12** and explain to your class that you have broken your new iPhone by accident and these are the Google search results for ways to repair it. Ask them which search result they find most trustworthy and which one they would click on? In your discussion, ask them to give reasons for their decision.

The most trustworthy result is most likely search number 4, as this is the official Apple support website. The first 3 search results were advertisements, as highlighted by the box beside them. Although valid websites, they paid the search engine to be there to be at the top of the results page. More information about how search result engines work is below.

**Background teacher information**

- ✓ Recent research suggests that there are some young people who believe that information online is “always true”,<sup>1</sup> it is important to continue to remind students about being critical about what they see online.
- ✓ Some people may trust the online content on websites more if the websites appear professional and slick.
- ✓ Some young people also believe that the first result displayed by a search engine is truthful, or the most accurate. Challenge this assumption, as the first results in a search engine can often be **ads**, as displayed by a box beside them. These organisations have paid the search engine to be in the first position in a search result and this does not reflect their accuracy.
- ✓ Also, some young people may think the green ‘tick’ or padlock that may appear next to a search result (if an antivirus program is installed) is a sign of how reliable a website is. It is important to note that these symbols only assess if there are any security issues on the site, such as suspected viruses/malware or unsecured login, but it doesn’t assess how truthful the content on the website is.

**How do search engines order results?**

Search engines rank results in a few different ways. Like a popularity contest, if lots of other websites link to a particular website, it will appear higher up in the list. It also works by using algorithms and working with key words to produce what it believes to be a relevant website for you. Finally, it also pays attention to when a website was last updated to ensure you get up-to-date information. However, a search engine, although sophisticated, does not have a human brain and can’t detect sarcasm, irony or lies in the content of websites. In this way, although being the first result in a search engine can give you an idea if a website is relevant to your search, it may not reveal if it is trustworthy and accurate.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/ztbjq6f>

**Activity 2: Homeless social networking feed**

8 minutes

This activity asks young people to think critically about the information in the social networking feed and to assess if they think it gives a true account of the life of a homeless person (**Slide 13**). It also highlights how information can be biased, glamorised or shown in a positive light, thus preventing the audience from getting the whole realistic picture.

Divide the class into small groups (3-4) and hand out **Appendix 2** to each group (**Slide 14**). Instruct them to discuss the questions on the sheet and to circle anything about the feed that they don’t think is realistic.

<sup>1</sup> [http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/children-parents-nov-15/childrens\\_parents\\_nov2015.pdf](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/children-parents-nov-15/childrens_parents_nov2015.pdf)

**Supporting students with additional needs:** You may wish to ask the students if they can find particular information based on what has been shared, eg how old are they? Where are they living? Why are they homeless? How long have they been homeless for? How do they feel? – Use their answers to support a discussion around how homelessness has been portrayed and how some information has been omitted.

Feedback as a group, looking at **slide 14**, bearing in mind the below discussion points.

- **What is actually being said in these comments?** Eg. Sleeping under the stars, or sleeping rough? Exploring London or having nowhere to go?
- **Dates of the comments** – What may have happened between January and April?
- Time the comment was posted – What situation might they actually be in? And what risks could they be facing which are not mentioned?
- **Photos** – Do the photos he has shared reflect homelessness? They are all taken by someone – who are they? Why did they take them (hidden agenda)? Why aren't they shown?
- **Full picture** – Are you getting the full picture in the comments and photos they are sharing? Why might things be left out?

Follow on discussion questions

- What questions does this social networking feed leave us with?
- After reading the social networking feed, does being homeless sound like a positive thing?
- If a young person read this and had never encountered homelessness before, might they be more likely to believe what it says?
- How did Happy Homeless make their lifestyle sound glamorous?

NB

If some students find this feed unrealistic, remind them that they may come across things online that they have never heard about. If it is written in a persuasive or glamorised way, they may well believe it. It is always important to be critical about what you read online, to weigh up what you already know and to make informed decisions about things.

### Activity 3: Fact Vs. Opinion

7 minutes

This activity challenges young people to distinguish between facts and opinions online; an important skill to learn when they are researching for school work.

Explain to the class that being able to distinguish between fact and opinion online is really important in order to be critical thinkers. On **slide 15**, ask the class to look at the picture and assess which statements are facts or which are opinions. What is the difference?

**Suggested answers:** Number 1 is a fact while the other 4 are opinions or it could be difficult to know if they are facts.

**Slide 16** explains the difference between facts and opinions. Emphasise to your students that facts can be verified and backed up with evidence whereas opinions might have less evidence to back them up. It also gives clues as to how factual sentences might begin and how opinions may be phrased. See below for definitions.

#### Key definitions

**Cambridge English Dictionary** defines a **fact** as “something that is known to have happened or to exist, especially something for which proof exists, or about which there is information”.

**Cambridge English Dictionary** defines an **opinion** as “a thought or a belief about something or someone”



Divide the class into small groups (3-4) and hand out **Appendix 3** to each group. They will need to read the blog and underline the sentences that are fact and circle the sentences that are opinion. They will then need to decide if they think the blog is trustworthy.

Feedback together as a group on **slide 17**, bearing in mind the following points.

**Suggested answers:**

**Opinions:**

- *By following the instructions on this page, you can quickly and easily shift your metabolism and reduce fat! (Is this true for everyone? Can this be verified or proven?)*
- *This is so easy, I feel great now! (This is this person's opinion, it may not be the same for everyone)*

**Facts:**

- *A recent survey demonstrates 87% felt a difference (Note: it is a fact that 87% of people gave this answer, what is unknown is who gave this answer and why, and how big the sample size was – 87% out of 20 people or out of 20,000?)*
- *By increasing protein intake, this will help to build muscle mass, all of which may help with fat-burning. (This can be proven by scientific research)*

**Is this blog trustworthy?**

- Does the blog promise a lot?
- Does it seem too good to be true?
- Does it explain how results will be made?
- Is it clear that the blog is selling something?
- Does it give you an indication of when the 'deal' runs out?
- Who wrote the blog? Do they seem trustworthy?
- Are the photos used clear? – notice how it is not clear whether it is the same person and a different angle has been used for the before and after images.

**Activity 4: Devise a checklist**

10 minutes

Explain that the class will be writing a checklist to help others to understand if websites and information online are trustworthy or not (**Slide 18**).

As a group, devise some examples before setting the class to task.

**Suggested answers:**

- *Check when the website was written- is the information up-to-date?*
- *Check who wrote the website – is it from a reputable/trustworthy source?*
- *Check the language – is it mostly facts or opinions?*
- *Check the images – do they look real or photoshopped?*
- *Check and think – what is the agenda here?*

Divide the class into pairs and ask them to write 5 things they should look out for when searching for information online. If time allows, hand out spare sheets of A4 paper so that each group can design a poster to showcase their checklist. This could be displayed around the school to educate other students.

**Supporting students with additional needs:** You may wish to allow the students to annotate the examples shown in this lesson, eg homeless social media feed, Google search results, with what you should look out for online. This could be put together as a poster to show their learning.

Feedback as a group by asking some pairs what they wrote as their checklist. Summarise by going through the **slides 19-22** to recap.

**Plenary: Choose top tip**

5 minutes

Ask the class to vote for their most important or most practical tip which would help their peers to think critically about online content (Slide 23). Discuss how they could spread these tips around their school to educate other students.

Show slide 24 to remind them of the importance of talking to someone if they are ever worried or upset by anything they see or experience online. Many young people may turn to a friend in the first instance, but encourage them to also tell a trusted adult in order to receive further support and help. They can also report online content directly to social networking sites or the website it is hosted on. Should they see content online encouraging people to commit acts of terrorism or anything that might condone or encourage acts of violence, you can report anonymously to the government. [www.gov.uk/report-terrorism](http://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism). Should they receive messages from people promoting this type of illegal behaviour, they can also report it through this link.

Top tips for staying safe online, as well as practical information and advice on a number of online safety topics can be found at [www.childnet.com/young-people/secondary](http://www.childnet.com/young-people/secondary). (Slide 25-26)



## Thinking critically about what you see online

Which site would be most reliable?

### 1. Official Visitor Information Service – Visit Follyoaks



#### Helpful discussion questions:

1. What about this website looks trustworthy?
2. What about this website doesn't look trustworthy?
3. Does this website have a hidden agenda?

### 2. A social media post



#### Helpful discussion questions:

1. Does this review look trustworthy?
2. Could this review have a hidden agenda?



### 3. A blog about Follyoaks



#### Helpful discussion questions:

1. What about this blog looks trustworthy?
2. Could this blog have a hidden agenda?
3. Are you more likely to trust a person than an organisation online?

### 4. Unofficial website about Follyoaks



#### Helpful discussion questions:

1. What about this website looks trustworthy?
2. What about this website doesn't look trustworthy?

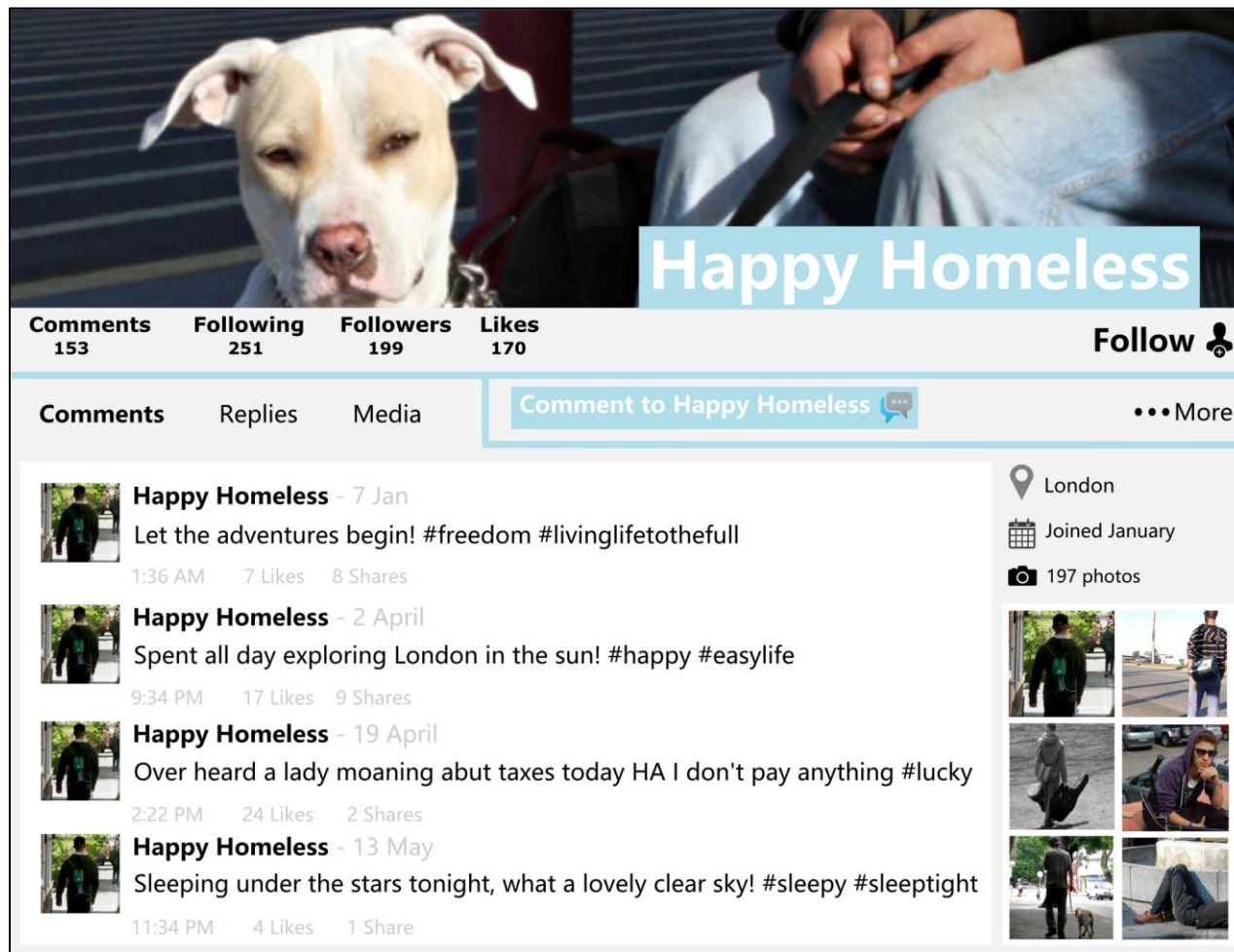
Rank how trustworthy these sources of information are from 1-4. (1 being the most trustworthy)

Visit Follyoaks	A review about Follyoaks	A blog about Follyoaks	Another website about Follyoaks



## Thinking critically about what you see online

### Homeless social networking feed



- 1) Does this profile match your own knowledge about homelessness?  
Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Is this a realistic representation of homelessness?
- 3) Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Circle aspects of this social networking feed that don't seem realistic to you

### Further discussion points:

- 1) What can we learn from these comments? Do they give you the full story?
- 2) Looking at the dates of the comments and the hashtags in this feed, what is really being said? Is the life of a homeless person really as good as it appears?
- 3) If a young people who had never encountered homelessness before, read this feed, would they believe what was written?
- 4) Photos – Do the photos he has shared reflect homelessness? They are all taken by someone – who are they? Why did they take them (hidden agenda)? Why aren't they shown?



## Thinking critically about what you see online

### Fact vs. Opinion

*this little blog of mine*

Time to say goodbye to your bloated belly

before → after



You want to wear your favourite figure-hugging dress but are worried about your flabby stomach? By following the instructions on this page, **you can quickly and easily shift your metabolism and reduce fat within 7 days!**

This is not just a quick fix. It will **change your shape forever.** By increasing protein intake, this will increase your metabolism and help to build muscle mass, all of which help with fat-burning.

A recent survey demonstrated that **87% of those who followed the advice felt the difference!**

*"This is excellent. I had given up on weight loss...I didn't think anything could help me. This is so easy and I feel great now!" – Clare 19 Swansea*

**[Call us](#) now or [email](#) to secure your spot**

The total value of this awesome package is a whopping £285.88 and you're going to pay just £19.95\*

But act fast as this offer won't last forever!

[READ MORE >>](#)

- 1) Underline the sentences that you think are facts.
- 2) Put a circle around the sentences that you think are opinions.
- 3) Discuss with your partner if there is anything you don't think is trustworthy about this blog.
- 4) Does it say when this blog was written?