



Thinking critically about what you see online

Introduction

The internet is a fundamental part of young people's lives today and provides them with a platform to share ideas, talents and passions with a huge online community of people from all over the world. However, this means that young people need to become ever more critical about the information they see online. Many risks we can see and experience in the offline world have found their way into the online world as well and the purpose of this resource is for students to learn how to think critically about the content they see and the people they interact with online. Through discussion and mocked-up examples, this resource aims to facilitate discussions and enable students to develop the critical thinking skills needed to question what they see and experience online and to explore possible motives behind the content posted online and the contact they might receive. The secondary pack will also explore the idea of online propaganda and consider how this may be presented or shared online.

This teacher guidance provides you with the appropriate background documents for schools and additional content to help you deliver this resource to students. It will give you an overview of the relevant laws online and support in establishing a safe learning environment in which you can facilitate open discussions.

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Oxford dictionary - 'The objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement.'

Cambridge dictionary - 'The process of thinking carefully about a subject or idea, without allowing feelings or opinions to affect you.'



Being a critical thinker doesn't mean rejecting all information you encounter, it merely means not accepting information immediately at face value. Instead you should think critically about the information that is in front of you, 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.

2. Advice for using the resource

This resource has been designed to support teachers in facilitating discussions about online content, contact and propaganda. The resource is split into two packs; primary and secondary, which both contain lesson plans, worksheets and presentations. The primary pack explores the reliability of online content and the motives behind online contact by using age appropriate and engaging online examples. The secondary pack takes a step on from this by including a lesson on propaganda and how this is portrayed and used online to influence others.

Each lesson aims to explore ‘what is trust’ and the strategies you can use to identify reliable or trustworthy online content or contact.

Prior to using the resource you may wish to:

- Review the Prevent Duty guidance (see section 7)
- Be aware of any relevant school policies around use of technology and the internet
- Review the FAQs about online behaviour so you are prepared to answer questions from students

Preparing the resource for use in class

- Review the examples used within the lesson plan. All of the content has been created under a creative commons licence so it can be changed to suit the needs of your students. For example you may wish to use a real example of content you have seen online or a current news story.
- If you have students with additional needs then check the lesson plans for tips on how to differentiate the activities.

Assessing students' knowledge and understanding

- Many of the activities pose an opportunity for informal assessment of the students understanding and perception of risk. This has been highlighted within each lesson plan.

3. Establishing a safe learning environment

1. **Set up clear ground rules:** Create ground rules through a class contract or working agreement with students which will clearly state the agreed basis on which all discussions/participation will take place. Examples could include: taking care when divulging information about ourselves, to listen to each other without judgement. An effective set of ground rules will be in language that is age appropriate and as far as possible, devised as positive behaviours, eg. 'We will listen to each other', 'We will be sensitive to the needs of other people'.
2. **Non-judgemental approach:** A good PSHE lesson generates discussion, and although some views or opinions can and should be challenged, it is important not to shame or judge a student who shares something sensitive or controversial with the class. Instead, educators should praise students who keep to the ground rules and appropriately challenge those who do not.
3. **'No real names' policy:** It is important that students feel that their learning is taking place in a safe environment and a PSHE lesson should be a safe place for them to speak about their feelings, thoughts and opinions. To protect themselves, and others, students should always talk in third person and speak about 'a friend' or 'someone they know' instead of using people's real names.
4. **Listening to others:** It is important that all students feel they can share their thoughts and opinions freely and that they will be listened to by both the other students and teacher. Students should feel that any comment or question can be asked no matter how small.
5. **No obligation to participate:** It is important to reassure students that they do not have to participate in anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or answer any question which they feel is too personal. If at any point a student wishes not to participate in a certain activity or discussion, then it is better not to insist on it as it may be the case that they have direct personal experience of some of the issues being discussed.
6. **Handling questions:** Given the sensitive nature of the topics discussed in PSHE lessons it may be that you are asked something which you are unsure of or not comfortable answering. It is important to check you've understood their question clearly and explain that you might not know the answer, but that you will find out more and get back to them later. You might need to consult a more senior colleague or check the school policy if it is a safeguarding issue. Try to always ask the students themselves what they think before giving your opinion. Be aware that how you answer a question may depend on the situation in which it was asked. Consider different responses: short, simple answer to the class, answer them privately after the lesson or value the question but explain it goes beyond the lesson's learning objectives and that you can talk about it another time. You may also wish to have an anonymous question box available for students to ask more sensitive questions or use techniques like 'save it for later' so that you can revisit discussions at an appropriate time or when you have more information available.
7. **Seating plans:** As PSHE is a diverse curriculum area where discussion plays a large part in the learning, it may be worth considering an ideal or an alternative seating arrangement that encourages discussion and involvement. Some activities may also require group work so a more open space may be preferable.
8. **Expectations around disclosures:** It is important for young people to understand that while the session provides a space to be open and honest, the school has a duty of care to protect young people. Any disclosures made that are considered by an educator to be a safeguarding issue cannot be kept a secret and must be followed up. This should be reported to your designated safeguarding lead, in line with the school's safeguarding policy.

For more guidance on how to approach a high quality PSHE lesson you can read the [PSHE Association's guidelines](#).

4. The laws online

Identity theft

Identity theft laws make it illegal to adopt or exploit another person's identity. These laws encompass fraud, obtaining other people's personal information for the purposes of financial gain, scams and impersonation. The relevant laws are:

- **Theft Act 1968:** This act explains that stealing someone's identity is similar to stealing someone's property. It mentions manipulating information for the purposes of stealing goods and false accounting.
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/60
- **Data Protection 1998:** This Act explains that a person's private information (race, age, sex, sexual orientation, health records, and financial records) can't be divulged. It outlines that UK citizens have the right to obtain information about themselves and it also lays out how long companies can hold on to personal information of people on databases.
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents
- **Identity Cards 2006:** This Act covers passports and identity cards and seeks to protect against personal identity theft. This act also legitimises the collection of personal information without consent for crime and justice purposes.
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/15/contents
- **Fraud Act 2006:** covers "phishing" and "hacking" or misrepresenting your identity. 'Phishing' refers to the fraudulent practice of sending out falsified emails from 'reputable' companies in the hope that people will reveal their passwords and personal information.
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/35/section/2

More information to be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275784/13-521-identity-related-crime-uk.pdf

Counter- terrorism and security

There are laws that exist that protect the UK from threats to national security. These laws fall under the Security Service Act 1989 and the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The role of MI5 is "*the protection of national security and in particular its protection against threats such as terrorism, espionage and sabotage, the activities of agents of foreign powers, and from actions intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means.*"

The counter terrorism act reveals that internet data can be searched in the interests of national security.

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/section/21/enacted

Grooming

Grooming refers to the practice of an adult contacting a child online or offline, with the intent of meeting and potentially harming that child. More recently we have seen this also include an adult making contact with a child to obtain explicit pictures in order to exploit that child. Grooming comes under the updated Sexual Offences Act 2003 whereby intent is also a factor in the sentencing of the perpetrator. Online cases of grooming should be reported to CEOP, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Unit, who are a branch of the National Crime Agency. ceop.police.uk/

www.cps.gov.uk/legal/s_to_u/sentencing_manual/s15_grooming/

Hate crime

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) define a Hate Incident as any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or because they are transgender. Not all hate incidents will amount to criminal offences, but those that do, become hate crimes. Some hateful online messages regarding race, religion etc. may be perceived as hate speech and can be reported at True Vision - www.report-it.org.uk/

www.cps.gov.uk/northeast/victims_and_witnesses/hate_crime/

Malicious communications

The Communications Act 2003 section 127, see Stones 8.30110B, covers the sending of improper messages. Section 127(1) (a) relates to a message that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character and should be used for indecent phone calls and emails. Section 127(2) targets false messages and persistent misuse intended to cause annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety.

Malicious communications including threats of violence

The Malicious Communications Act 1988 section 1, see Stones 8.20830, deals with the sending to another of any article which is indecent or grossly offensive, or which conveys a threat, or which is false, provided there is an intent to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient. The offence covers letters, writing of all descriptions, electronic communications, photographs and other images in a material form, tape recordings, films and video recordings. Poison-pen letters are usually covered.

Particularly serious examples may justify a more serious charge, e.g. threats to kill.

The offence is one of sending, delivering or transmitting, so there is no requirement for the article to reach the intended recipient.

www.cps.gov.uk/legal/a_to_c/communications_offences/

5. FAQs about online behaviour

Questions from students

There are lots of scams and so much misleading information online – should we believe anything on the internet?

Online content has not been created and uploaded by computers but is instead a reflection of the people who put it there. We know that in the offline world there are people who seek to scam or mislead us and the online world is no different. Being a critical thinker doesn't mean rejecting all information online, it merely means not accepting information immediately at face value, instead you should think critically about the information that is in front of you, weighing up what you know to be true and what is written and checking with others if you are unclear.

Always remember if things seem too good to be true then they usually are and check a few different websites instead of relying solely on the first site that comes up on a search engine. Remember, you can always look in a book, and check with other people as well! There is always a reason for posting content online and it is important to think about what this reason/motive could be, and then to make an informed decision.

How are you supposed to know if you can't trust someone, if they don't say anything worrying?

Just like in real life, people can be misleading. Someone who you thought was your friend, could still betray your trust, or deceive you. Online, it can be trickier to gauge a person's moral character as you are not speaking face-to-face. It is also quite easy to pretend to be someone you are not online. You will not be able to pick up on the small mannerisms or facial expressions that might give away the fact that someone is lying to you.

However, this is not to say that everyone who speaks to you online is lying to you. Many people connect online and make genuine relationships. However, it is important, to be wary of people who you only know online. If you have never met them before, they are still a stranger and even if you have a picture of them, it can be difficult to guarantee that it is actually them.

Remember, if anyone makes you uncomfortable online, asks you lots of personal questions, challenges you to do something you wouldn't normally do or tries to get you away from your family and friends, be wary of this and report to CEOP (ceop.police.uk/) or to the counter terrorism unit (www.gov.uk/report-terrorism).

Should we never take risks online? What if you had entered a competition, you don't want to miss out!

True, there are genuine competitions that exist online and if you won, it would be a shame not to collect your prize. However, if you didn't enter a competition then you didn't! Be wary of information online that 'guarantees immediate results' or anything that sounds too good to be true. Be careful about giving away personal information or clicking on links sent by strangers, as this might be a phishing exercise. Phishing is defined as the attempt by seemingly trustworthy organisations to acquire personal information, such as passwords and bank details, from people so this information can be used for malicious purposes.

Can you say what you want online? Where is the line between freedom of expression and propaganda/hate speech?

Freedom of expression is incredibly important and the internet is a fantastic platform for people to share their views with the world. However, human rights also come with responsibilities and it is important to be aware of how our actions may have an impact on others. You have the right to show support for a cause you believe in, but you do not have the right to incite or promote violence against others. Social media sites, in particular, don't allow people to express support for violent, criminal or racist behaviour that could be perceived as hate speech. Your account may be restricted or blocked if you do decide to engage in this type of behaviour.

You can find more information about what social networking sites will allow in the links below:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/communitystandards

Instagram: help.instagram.com/477434105621119/

Snapchat: support.snapchat.com/en-US/a/guidelines

Twitter: support.twitter.com/articles/18311

What happens if you report something online?

You can report hate crimes to [True Vision](https://www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force) who are a branch of the police (www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force). On most social media sites, should you see anything such as spam, violent or inappropriate content, you have the ability to report such posts or videos. The more context given at the time of the report, the better the reporting system will be, and reading the community guidelines or terms and conditions of the site should give a good indication of what kind of content breaks the Terms and conditions of a certain website.

Should someone make a report, the reported content will be taken to one side and reviewed by a member/s of the safety team at that particular organisation. If the post goes against the rules of the site, the offending

post will be removed and they may take action against the account responsible, ranging from a warning to banning that person from the site. It is important to bear in mind that not all reported content breaks the rules of the platform. Although you may find the content or opinions of others distasteful or offensive, everyone is entitled to an opinion and if it doesn't break the rules of the platform, this content may not be removed.

Questions from teachers

What if my students don't see the risks or harm in the same way as adults?

Young people may lead you to believe that 'they know everything' about being safe online, or they might over-estimate their ability to help themselves out of a situation. Often, they claim that that it 'wouldn't happen to me' or they struggle to see any negative consequences that might occur.

As a teacher, it is important to listen to students and hear their reactions, but also to challenge them if necessary. You may wish to discuss high profile cases which the young people may be familiar with. The purpose of this resource is to encourage young people to think critically about what they see and who they speak to online, and part of this is to be aware of the worst case scenarios, should they arise.

What should I do if I'm worried one of my students is being influenced by someone online?

If you have noticed a change in a student's behaviour, or if someone lets you know that they are worried about a friend who is speaking to someone online, these are safeguarding issues and should be treated as such. Grooming and radicalisation are serious matters and a report should be made to the designated safeguarding lead in school. You can see further advice on reporting within section 7.

6. Definitions to support teacher's understanding

In this section you will find definitions and explanations of how online scams, extreme content and unwanted contact occur online. These have been provided as additional information to support teachers in understanding how the online world can influence and impact on young people. There is **no expectation that these will be shared with the students** and some of the definitions and explanations may not be appropriate for younger year groups. If you do wish to share them with students then ensure you have all the relevant facts to hand and appropriate support networks to signpost to, see section 7 for this.

SMiShing (SMS phishing):

The victim receives a text message that they are about to be charged for a service they never ordered. They are told that they need to contact the company immediately to cancel the order or be responsible for the charge. The text includes a hyper-link, which the victim clicks on, taking them to a fake website that triggers the download of a program that breaches the security features of their phone.

Phishing:

The victim receives an email from their bank telling them that they need to update their password immediately or risk having their online banking service shut down. The victim clicks on the link in the email, which takes them to a fake ("spoofed") bank site where they are instructed to enter their username and current password. They comply and in so doing, gives the fraud operator their on-line banking login information.

For more information and examples, go to the Fraud Avengers site - fraudavengers.org/scams/

More information about up-to-date scams can be found at Action Fraud, the national fraud and cybercrime reporting centre - www.actionfraud.police.uk/

Online grooming

Online grooming is the process by which an adult with an inappropriate sexual interest in children will approach them online, with the intention of developing a relationship in order to meet them in person and intentionally cause harm. If you have any concerns that a child is being groomed then report this directly to your designated safeguarding lead and through CEOP's website (further details can be found in section 7).

Radicalisation

The Oxford English dictionary defines radicalisation as 'The action or process of causing someone to adopt radical positions on political or social issues.'

Extremism

The Oxford English dictionary defines extremism as 'The holding of extreme political or religious views; fanaticism.'

Online chat

The process of chatting online can take place in many different ways depending on the platform and desired level of privacy. Messages can be broadcast more publicly in the form of online comments and status' or sent more privately through direct messages or chats.

7. Further links to advice

Other relevant documents for schools

Department for Education: Advice about promoting fundamental British Values

- [Guidance for maintained schools](#) (Nov 2014)
- [Guidance for independent schools, academies and free schools](#) (Nov 2013)

Documents about the government's strategies to prevent terrorism and radicalisation

Prevent strategy: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf

Channel guidance: www.gov.uk/government/publications/channel-guidance (Channel is a programme which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.)

Further support

- The Department for Education have set up a telephone helpline (020 7340 7264) and an email address (counter.extremism@education.gsi.gov.uk) to enable people to raise concerns directly with the department.
- If you have a concern about a child in respect of extremism and the support options are not available locally, talk to your LSCB police representative or PREVENT coordinator who will be able to discuss support options.
- If you have a digital safety concern then please contact **The UK Safer Internet Centre's** Professionals Online Safety Helpline on 0844 381 4772 or helpline@saferinternet.org.uk

Reporting online content

- Report terrorism related content to the police's Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit at www.gov.uk/report-terrorism.
- You can also refer content of concern directly to social media platforms - find out how www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/teachers-and-professionals/safety-features

Training

For more information about the Home Office's radicalisation awareness training product Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) email WRAP@homeoffice.x.gsi.gov.uk

Reporting to the police

999 or your local police

Call the **Anti-Terrorist Hotline** on 0800 789 321 if you suspect someone is involved in terrorism in any way

Contact **CEOP** if you have any concerns regarding grooming ceop.police.uk/

Contact **True Vision** If someone is being targeted on the grounds of their religion, race, sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability www.report-it.org.uk/home

Support networks for young people

School – Establish who may be a main point of contact for pastoral care within your school or year group and share this with the students.

Childline - Childline is free service to help anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. You can contact them on 0800 1111 or by chatting to them through their website www.childline.org.uk/

YoungMinds – YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity championing the wellbeing and mental health of young people. They offer support and advice through their website youngminds.org.uk/

Thinkuknow – Thinkuknow is a website which offers young people advice on their online lives and a reporting route if someone is trying to contact them in order to meet up, gain personal information or obtain images of videos of them www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

Resource authors: Kate Edwards, Gareth Cort, Clodhna Purdue

If you have any questions about the Trust Me resource then please feel free to contact Childnet by email at: education@childnet.com

If you wish to give any feedback on the resource then please take a few moments to complete the online feedback form: www.surveymonkey.com/r/childnet-trustme