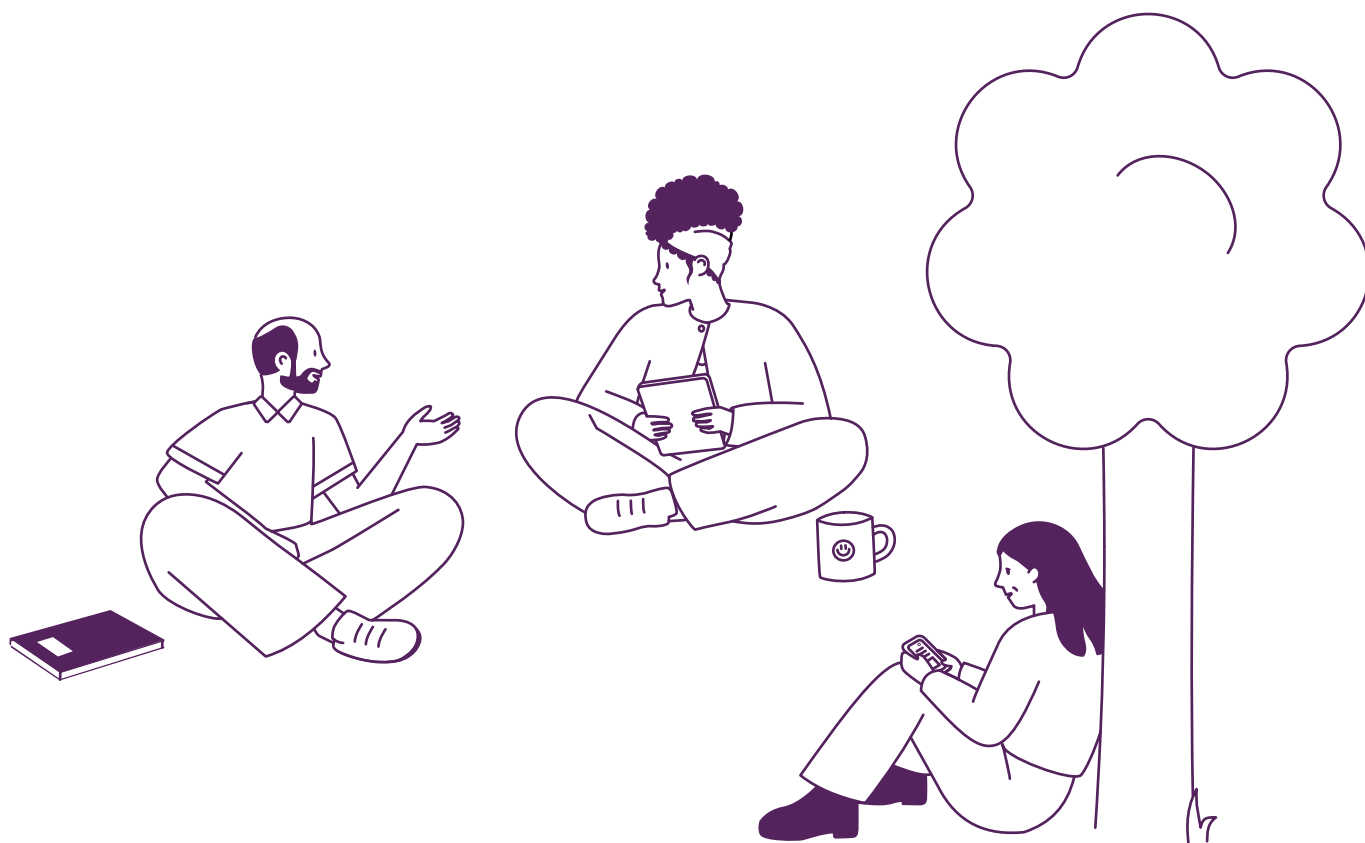


Living with Misinformation: A Media Literacy Guide for Action

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WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



TACTICAL
TECH

let's start!

introduction

Dreaming of your next holiday? Social media are flooded with images showing tropical islands that make you want to book a ticket! Election season coming up? No worries. Social media ads tell you who to vote for and why. Sound familiar?

Digital technologies and media such as the internet and social media offer endless ways to connect, create, and learn. We need access to these technologies to help us understand the world we live in, make decisions that impact our lives, and participate in communities and society. But we now have access to so much information that it can be completely overwhelming. How can we identify which information and media are trustworthy and accurate?

Digital media provide us with easy access to high-quality information but they also include misinformation – false or misleading information – that makes an already crowded space even more confusing.

Misinformation can hurt individuals and whole communities by:

- spreading false narratives, repeating unfair stereotypes, and distorting how we see the world
- making it harder for us to solve our social issues fairly and collectively
- creating or increasing polarisation between different groups and communities, causing tension and misunderstanding.

Misinformation can even make us doubt reality. When there's too much to read, watch, or listen to it's tough to know what's true and what's not. And now, with AI speeding things up, misinformation is spreading faster than ever before.

But there's also good news: there's a lot we can do, on our own and together, to navigate misinformation. As this problem becomes more prevalent, more and more people want to help their families, friends, and communities deal with misinformation.

So how can we gain superpowers to identify and respond to misinformation? We can start by developing our own media literacy and supporting our communities to do the same. Media literacy is the ability to use media critically and creatively. Verifying information and creating, understanding, finding, sharing, and editing reliable and trustworthy media content requires us to:

- increase our knowledge about how media environments work
- ask critical questions about media environments and media content
- learn new digital skills to help us make informed divisions.

Are you an educator, librarian, rights defender, or simply an individual who is active in your community? Do you want to help other people respond to misinformation? Then this guide is for you. You'll find three steps: 'Get ready', 'Get on board', and 'Get it done', each with useful and practical tools, activities, and tips for how to do just that. You and your community will become better equipped to deal with misinformation.

Want to know where this guide's power comes from?

Living with Misinformation: A Media Literacy Guide for Action is based on three years of research with Australian adults, focusing on everyday experiences of misinformation and how media literacy can help address this challenge. Download a free book about the research [here](#).

how to use this guide

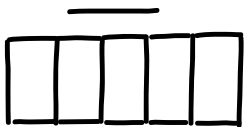
This guide has three chapters that will take you on a journey of discovery and action to prepare you to launch media literacy initiatives with and for your communities.

WITH THIS GUIDE YOU WILL:

- 1. GET READY:** learn the essentials for understanding and responding to misinformation. **05–20**
- 2. GET ON BOARD:** see how Australians navigate media and misinformation, and use the *Community Self-Assessment Tool* to identify what your community needs most. **21–30**
- 3. GET IT DONE:** explore inspiring stories and helpful *resources* from around the globe. Check out the *Evaluation Tool* to see your initiative's impact! **31–43**



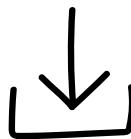
THE GUIDE IN 5 BEATS



Each chapter starts with a handy navigation menu that shows you what's inside — from practical tips to useful tools and resources.

1. 2.
3.

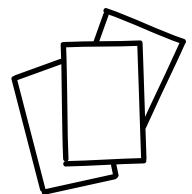
We recommend exploring all three sections, but feel free to jump straight to the parts that interest you most and use the resources however suits you best.



Keep an eye out for this icon throughout the guide — it points you to downloadable resources and tools you can use for your own initiatives.



The guide comes with a set of videos and posters you can use to build your skills and bring extra fun to your community activities.



You will find Activity cards you can use with your communities to talk about the basics of misinformation.



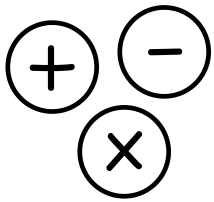
01

get ready

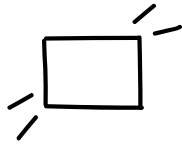
In this section, you'll learn the essentials for navigating misinformation in everyday life, including what misinformation is, how it spreads, how it affects individuals and society, and practical ways to help your community take back some control. Plus, you'll discover questions and activities to help you and your community make smarter choices in a complex digital information environment.



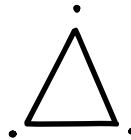
WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE 'GET READY' PACK:



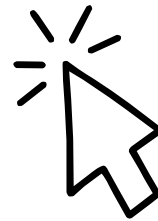
Misinformation basics: Things you need to know



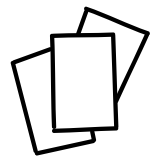
Visualisations exploring how we are exposed to misinformation and what we can do about it



The misinformation triad: The three things everyone needs to know to regain some control



Media literacy basics



Activity cards you can use with your communities to talk about misinformation basics

→ 1. MISINFORMATION BASICS

Digital media – like websites, social media, apps, email, and streaming services – are a big part of our lives and offer many benefits. Media brings us laughter and inspiration, teaches us new things, helps us stay connected, and delivers us news and information. We can use media to create, share, and let our voices be heard.

But sometimes, digital media carry misinformation that is unreliable, misleading, or untrue. Some of this misinformation is harmless, like those silly, goofy, or funny AI memes and videos in our social media feeds. Other times, it can cause real problems, especially during big events or in times of crisis. Misinformation can not only

influence what we decide to buy or who we turn to for health advice, but it can also affect our election outcomes and create division in communities by spreading false, biased narratives. It can also define the way we deal (or don't deal) with challenges like poverty, climate change, pandemics, and conflicts.

Ultimately, when the information we come across is misleading or untrue, it can lead us to make poorly informed decisions.

MISINFORMATION VS. DISINFORMATION: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Misinformation:

False and misleading information that is shared by mistake.



Disinformation:

False and misleading information that has been created and shared on purpose.

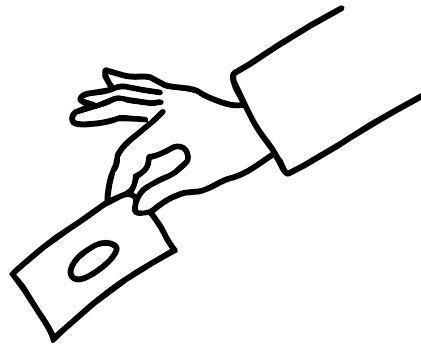
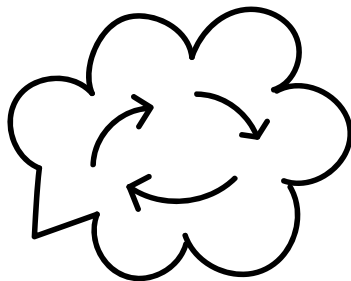
In real life, it can be hard to figure out who created the misinformation and why. So, in this guide, we use the term 'misinformation' to refer to all kinds of false, inaccurate, or misleading information.

WHY DO PEOPLE CREATE OR SPREAD MISINFORMATION?

These are some of the most common reasons:

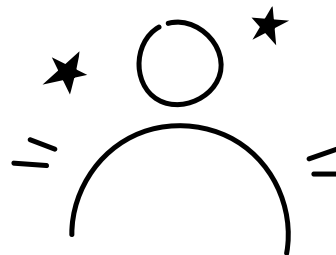
1.

To make money: often misinformation becomes viral. This means that whoever created the information or misinformation will gain financially through the monetisation of followers, clicks and shares. Others spread misinformation to trick people into falling for scams, buying their products, or visiting websites that generate ad revenue for them.



2.

To convince people: misinformation can be used to manipulate people so they adopt a particular vision of the world, or to promote political preferences, biases, prejudices, and beliefs. This is often the case with persuasive political campaigns launched around election periods.



3.

To gain influence: sometimes misinformation is used as a social and psychological tool by people or organisations to build their own profile of influence.



4.

By accident: sometimes people misunderstand the facts, or they have been misled or misinformed, and that leads them to create or share misinformation.

→ 2. 'A MISINFORMATION DAY' VS. 'A CURIOUS, CRITICAL, AND CONFIDENT DAY'

When we spend a lot of time online, it's hard to keep track of all the information we've come across. Have you ever wondered how many times you've been exposed to content or information that is false, inaccurate, or misleading in a single day? You might like to take notes one day of everything you come across that seems dodgy, false, misleading, or untrustworthy to get a better sense of where this content is coming from and what message it's trying to send.

Before learning how to respond to misinformation, it's important to identify the forms it takes, consider why it's so prevalent in our lives, and reflect on the impact it may have on us and our communities.

TO UNDERSTAND HOW AND WHY WE ARE CONSTANTLY EXPOSED TO MISINFORMATION, FIRST WE NEED TO KNOW HOW WE CONSUME MEDIA AND INFORMATION:

94% of Australian adults

use social media at least weekly. This is the most-used type of media.

48% of Australian adults

use five or more social media platforms weekly.

87% of Australian adults

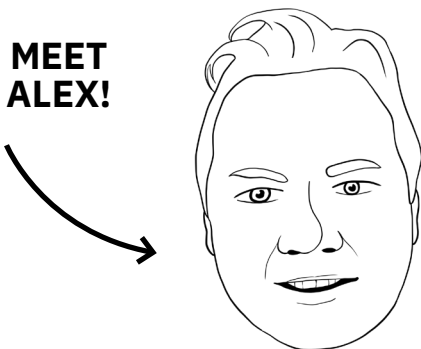
watch free-to-air TV at least weekly. 78% watch streaming television and 69% use a news website or app.

Using a high number of social media platforms correlates with an increased exposure to misinformation.

Source: Adult Media Literacy survey 2024.
Data represents adult Australians aged 18+

A MISINFORMATION DAY VS. A CURIOUS, CRITICAL, AND CONFIDENT DAY

**MEET
ALEX!**



They work as a project manager at a small company. Alex likes to stay informed and is often online. Below are two versions of Alex's day. What's different? The first is **'A misinformation day,'** showing how Alex stumbles across misinformation and how quickly reactions, beliefs, and biases can create a spiral and affect others. The second is **'A Curious, critical, and confident day'** where Alex faces the same challenges, but this time takes action to stop misinformation from spreading.

These two versions show that while we can't avoid seeing misinformation, we can take back some control over what we see and how we manage it.

WAKE UP

Ding! Alex wakes up to a news alert. Their feed includes a sensationalist headline and image about rising unemployment, blaming migrants and making claims about rising immigration. The arguments are not supported by any sources, so can't be fact-checked. **Alex shares the story without pausing or checking, spreading the unverified claims and harmful stereotypes.**

TAKE A MOMENT AND MEDITATE

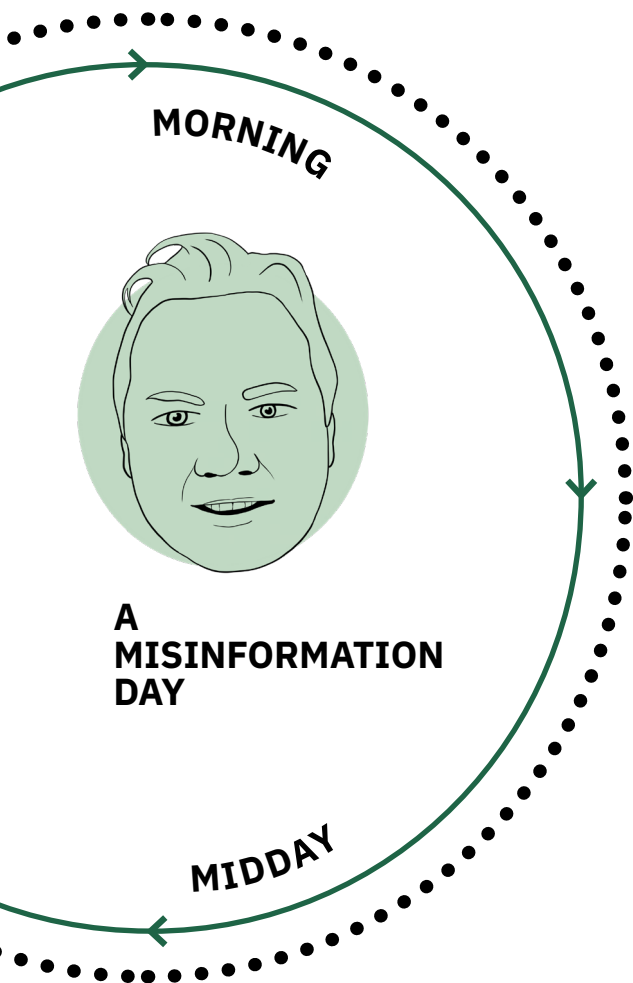
Let's salute the sun! Alex watches a relaxing yoga YouTube tutorial before going to work. Their favourite content creator recommends a miraculous tea brand. "Doctors don't want you to know about this tea", they say. Can Alex trust it? **Alex shares the video with an ill friend, who decides to follow the advice because they trust Alex. What can go wrong?**

ATTEND A WORK MEETING

Everyone's buzzing about a picture of a local celebrity cheering for a divisive politician, but it looks a bit suspicious! Alex receives the picture from a colleague and, without checking if it's even real, Alex forwards it to a few of their WhatsApp groups. **Soon, their friends and family have all seen it and start sharing it too. Alex has no idea, but the rumour mill is now working in overdrive, and the celebrity's social media accounts are filled with angry messages and comments.**

HAVE LUNCH & LISTEN TO A PODCAST

At lunchtime, Alex listens to a podcast where the guests argue about the election. They include a secretly recorded audio clip of a politician joking about lying to the public about a party policy, but a national fact-checking organisation has already debunked it as misinformation. **Alex shares it without checking. Suddenly, lots of people are talking about how this 'revelation' might change the election outcome.**



get ready

CARE ABOUT FINANCES

Back at work, Alex checks their emails and finds one shouting, "BANKING CRISIS BEGINS! Invest in crypto NOW!" Without much thought, Alex moves some money into their crypto trading account and passes on the 'news story' to their family and friends in a panic. **As everyone keeps sharing the news, more and more people make panicked decisions about what to do with their money.**

TIME TO GO BACK HOME

On the way home, Alex browses social media and spots a video full of scary crime stats. The video pieces together old crime videos but doesn't give any context or dates. **Alex feels fear and anger quickly well up, and so they share it, not knowing it includes half-truths, old news, and made-up stuff. The more people share, the scarier their community seems.**

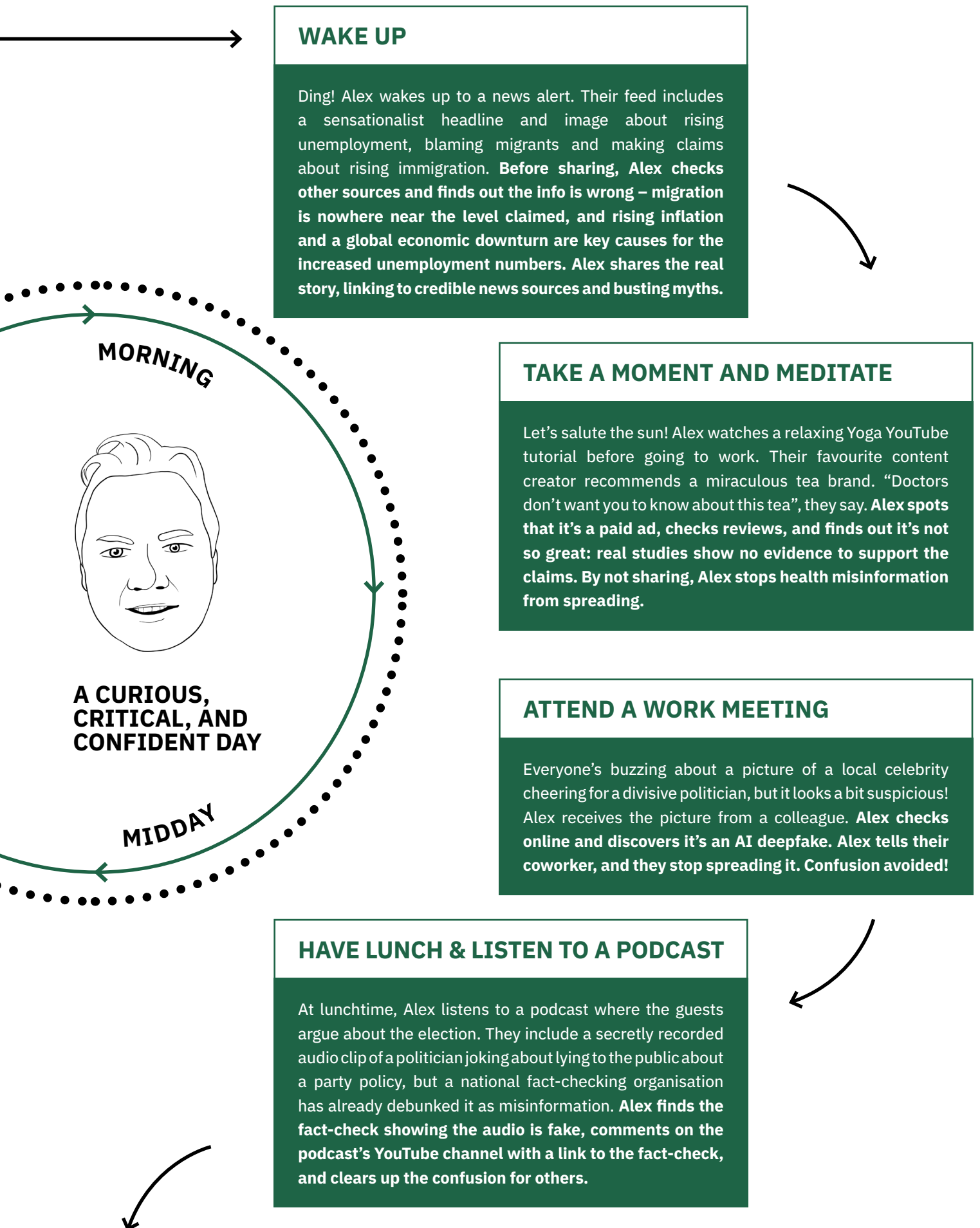
DINNER TIME

At dinner, Alex looks up a recipe on social media and finds one that calls for a specific butter brand. Their feed includes an ad that makes fun of other brands, based on supposedly scientific findings. **Alex thinks it's serious and decides to buy that brand next time and recommends it to others too.**

TIME TO GO TO BED

At bedtime, it's time for funny videos! Alex laughs at a silly video about couples and gender roles based on 'research'. Alex shares it before going to sleep. Lots of people see it, but the jokes hide problematic ideas about how women and men 'should' act. **Sharing it spreads gender stereotypes without anyone noticing; this was the point of the video.**

Download the "A Misinformation Day" activity card to use in your sessions and help your community identify the different moments and ways they are exposed to misinformation throughout the day.



get ready

CARE ABOUT FINANCES

Back at work, Alex checks their emails and finds one shouting, "BANKING CRISIS BEGINS! Invest in crypto NOW!" Alex pauses and, before going into panic mode, checks trusted finance blogs and realises it's a scam ad. They report it and then warn their network about it.

TIME TO GO BACK HOME

On the way home, Alex browses social media and spots a video full of scary crime stats. The video pieces together old crime videos but doesn't give any context or dates. Alex feels fear and anger quickly well up, but before sharing, they check the source of the statistics. It doesn't reference any credible research. Probably a bot!

DINNER TIME

At dinner, Alex looks up a recipe on social media and finds one that calls for a specific butter brand. Their feed includes an ad that makes fun of other brands, based on supposedly scientific findings. Alex checks a few other sources and can't find other information that supports what this ad is saying. It's probably a marketing stunt to get people sharing it; Alex decides to stick with the brand they already use.

TIME TO GO TO BED

At bedtime, it's time for funny videos! Alex laughs at a silly video about couples and gender roles based on 'research', but then notices that it reproduces harmful gender stereotypes. Alex changes their account settings to see fewer videos like it.

Download the 'A Curious, Critical, Confident day' activity card to use in your sessions and help your community identify the different ways they can respond to misinformation throughout the day.



→ 3. MISINFORMATION TRIAD: STORIES, PLATFORMS, AND PEOPLE

After we've reflected on how much misinformation and untrustworthy content we have to deal with every day, we can start asking some tough questions about the media stories we come across, the platforms that allow us to share these stories, and how people like us react to information and entertainment. This triangle – stories, platforms, and people – can help explain why misinformation spreads, but can also show us how we can find solutions.

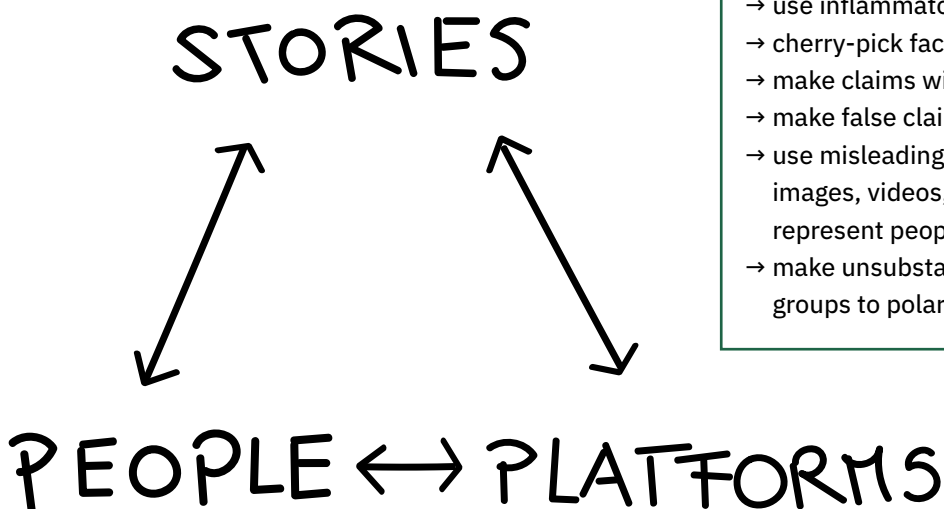
ONLINE STORIES: BETWEEN SENSATIONALISM, EMOTIONS, AND SHARES

Have you ever seen a video of a cute pet doing funny tricks that made you ask, ***"Is this real or fake?"*** Has this also happened when you've seen a negative, shocking political advertisement or a story about a specific group or person? That's the tricky part: misinformation can seem believable, trustworthy, or even logical. This is by design: misinformation is often made to confirm what we already believe or suspect to be true.

Sometimes, misinformation includes 'facts' that seem surprising or amazing. Other times, lies and misleading claims can be hidden behind a joke designed to make you 'share'. All too often, media stories are created to influence and manipulate us by encouraging emotional responses and by simplifying or generalising complex ideas.

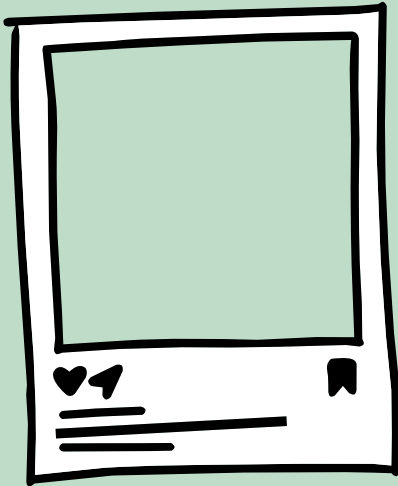
Media stories that carry misinformation are more likely to:

- frame ideas in misleading ways
- use inflammatory language
- cherry-pick facts
- make claims without any supporting evidence
- make false claims about real content
- use misleading, unflattering, and manipulated images, videos, or audio that falsely or unfairly represent people or events
- make unsubstantiated claims about specific groups to polarise and divide people.



Sometimes media stories are constructed to create conflict through an 'Us versus Them' dynamic. This dynamic can be part of the entertainment, where heroes clash with villains. But misinformation often uses polarising techniques to create unfair and harmful portrayals of individuals or groups.

It can draw on cultural tropes to reinforce social bias, stereotypes, prejudice and hate. Media creators who produce misinformation use polarising techniques to gain attention, often because this attention is financially profitable.



Your favourite content creator shares a sensationalist post that speaks negatively about a certain group of people. The post looks real and presents good arguments that validate your beliefs. Immediately you feel anger and fear – it makes you want to quickly share the post. There's little time for fact-checking in your busy day, and you trust your instincts. Anyway, you know the content creator because you've been following them for years: what could go wrong? **You click share – cha-ching! Sharing has helped the creator get more visitors to the post**, which links to their blog; and the more visitors they get to their blog, the more money they make through advertising revenue. Sound familiar? **This has become the norm now – content is often designed to create that reaction so it will go viral no matter its accuracy.**

But misinformation can be found outside of social media posts, too.

It can be in fictional and factual media like:

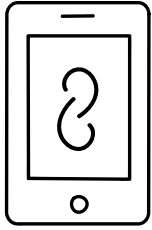
- TV shows and movies as well as fictional short-form entertainment videos. Think of a TV show or movie you've seen where there's a crudely stereotypical villain or hero. These stereotypical characters can fuel prejudices too.
- information-focused content that is presented as being based on facts, such as news media stories, historical accounts, research reports, and data visualisations.

Tip! remember that the creators behind media stories are often part of an industry where your attention is monetised because your views, likes, clicks, taps and shares can result in money being made.

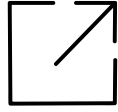
get ready



HOW MEDIA STORIES MAKE MONEY ONLINE



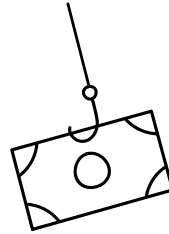
By selling products – for example, through adverts, paid promotions, or affiliate links



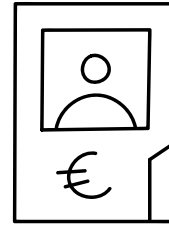
By encouraging you to visit a website where money is made from advertisements based on how many people view the page

100K

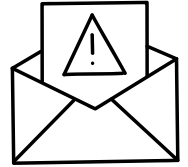
By getting you to like, view, follow, share – some social media platforms pay people when their accounts reach a high number of followers or their posts get a high number of views



By tricking you into falling for a scam designed to steal money from you



By taking your personal information, which can be sold to others



By generating leads for partner brands, earning creators a referral fee for every new sign-up or free trial

WHEN YOU SEE A STORY, ASK YOURSELF:

1.

Does this story show a person, group, or idea in an unfair, stereotypical, or inaccurate way?

2.

Does this story use reliable, trustworthy, or verifiable evidence?

3.

What visual, audio, or written techniques does this story use to communicate? Does the story feel sensationalist?

4.

What conventions (such as genre, style, or language) does this story use to inform, entertain, or persuade?

5.

What does the story make you feel? Do you feel an urge to share or like it? How has the creator prompted this response?

6.

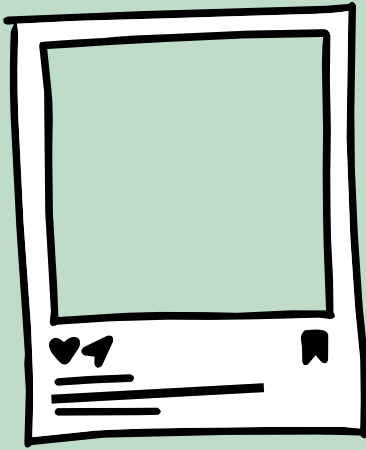
Who has created or shared this story? How might their motives have influenced what they're sharing?

PLATFORMS: DIGITAL MEDIA DESIGNED TO CAPTURE YOUR ATTENTION

Platforms help people create and distribute media stories. Apps, websites, social networks and video streaming sites are platforms that can help us share and create information – and misinformation. You might think misinformation spreading on these platforms is a new thing, but tall tales and false stories have been around forever in more traditional media outlets like TV, radio, movies, and newspapers. So, what's changed? Back in the day, there was more editorial control over the media stories that were published or broadcast. Now, anyone can post almost

anything without anyone checking it first. That means false media stories can spread in the blink of an eye.

Platforms and their algorithms are created and designed by people – not by chance or magic – and, as such, they inherit a vision of the world dreamt up by *their* owners and creators that is focused on their economic interests and *their* politics. Understanding that platforms are never neutral is a crucial first step before critically consuming digital media.

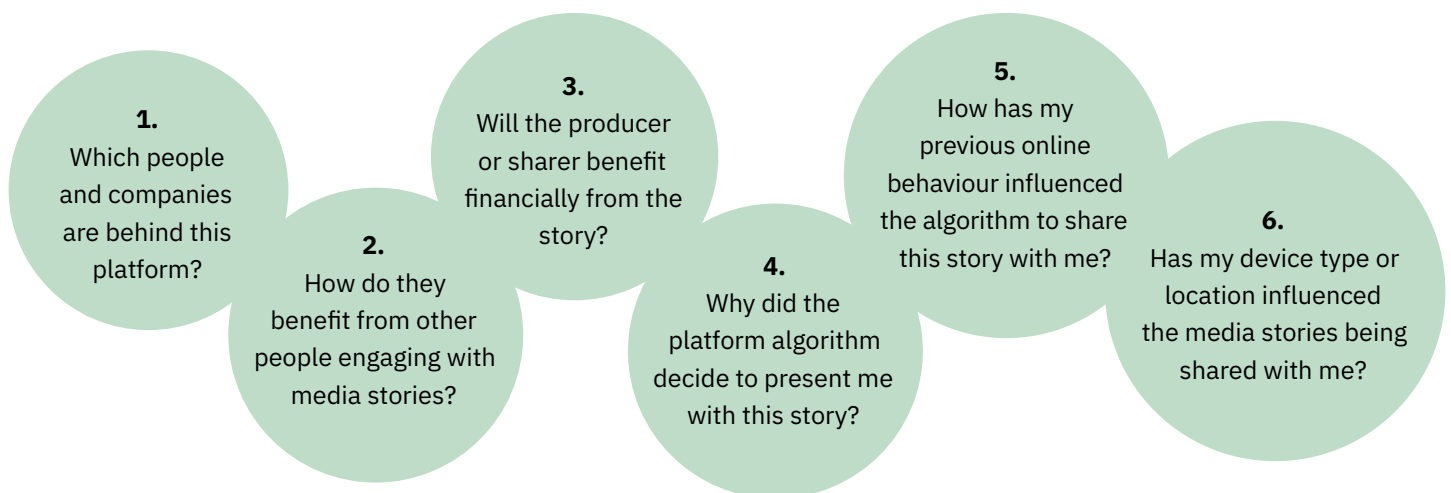


Let's think for a second: have you ever wondered why social media have 'like' and 'share' buttons? Or why certain colours are used? Social media include design features to encourage you to click, tap, like, and share. Those features aren't there by accident. They use techniques to grab your attention and appeal to your emotions. And behind all this are the algorithms that decide what pops up on your screen, mostly to make the platforms money. All this can make us less able to spot good information. Who's in charge of these algorithms, anyway? Shouldn't we have the right to know more about them and be able to make choices about the way they use our personal information?

The platforms determine how content can be monetised by content creators, which influences the kinds of stories that are created. This profit-driven model also influences content moderation: if controversial content is popular and generates revenue, platforms are less likely to remove it, and creators produce more of it. On today's

platforms, misinformation is more visible because it is designed to go viral. However, this also means that the platforms and algorithms can be redesigned and regulated if we hold these companies accountable. This is the perfect moment to start questioning our role – the role of people – in this system.

WHILE SPENDING TIME ON DIFFERENT PLATFORMS, ASK YOURSELF:

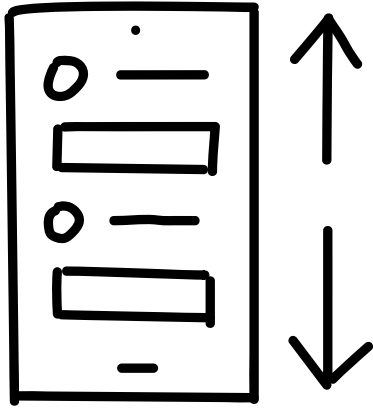


PEOPLE: ENGAGE, CREATE, SHARE, OR IGNORE?

By now, we know how media stories are created and spread on digital platforms. Next, we need to ask: what role do we, the people, play in this system? Most importantly, how can we help others respond to misinformation? People use media platforms for different purposes every day. With so much information online – some good, some not – people

have to make quick decisions to judge not just the quality and purpose of information and entertainment, but also how relevant it is to their lives. Usually, people's decision-making processes can't be separated from their own life experiences and existing beliefs.

get ready



Life today feels like we're always in a rush. This also happens when we try to get informed in an overwhelming online space. Imagine you go on social media because you heard about an accident in your town and wanted to learn more. Multiple sources – from media outlets to content creators – are sharing information, videos, pictures, and graphics. Without slowing down, how can you know which parts of this information you can trust?

There are a few strategies we can use to help us quickly decide what and who is trustworthy online, what deserves our likes and shares, and what should be ignored. Looking for 'red flags' is one strategy. You may have heard about looking for red flags when meeting new people. Similarly, we can look for red flags to help us judge media stories and platforms. Some red flags might indicate that a source is not trustworthy:

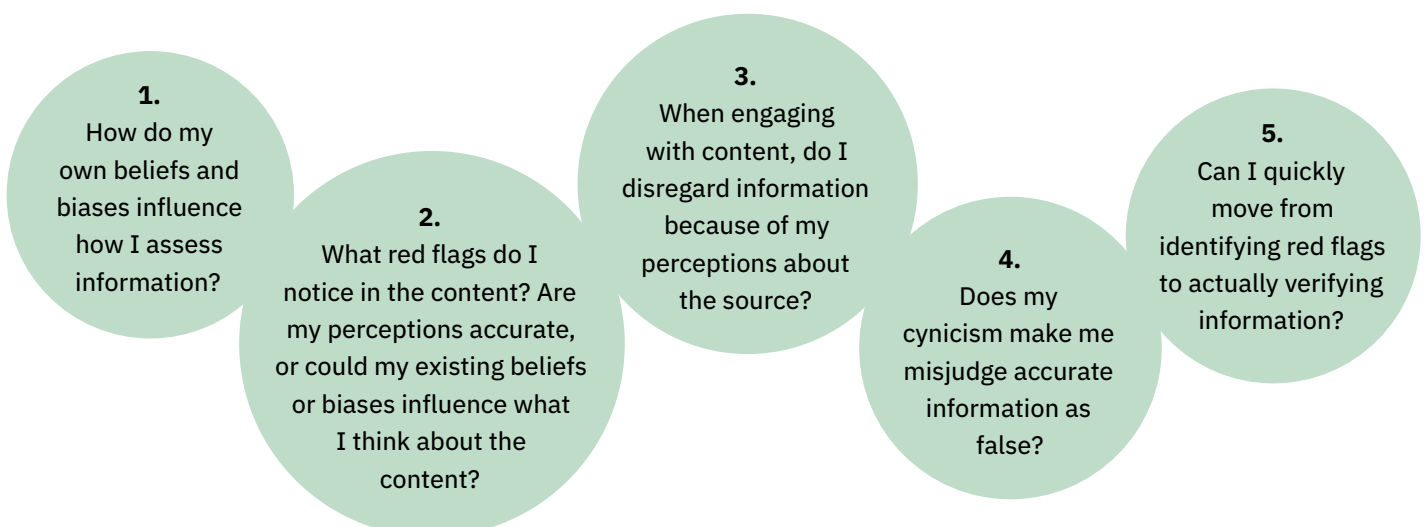
- There's insufficient information to support claims. If there's no evidence or details about where the evidence comes from, it's hard to verify whether it's trustworthy.
- The headlines use clickbait techniques to grab our attention.
- Inflammatory or hyperbolic language, like exaggerated or sensationalised details, is used. This can be

harmful, as they often aim to get attention through generalisations, stereotypes, or other biased tactics.

- Subjective claims reflect a journalist's or outlet's interests, a clear political slant, the use of spin, and no right of reply for the group of people who are the subject of the story.

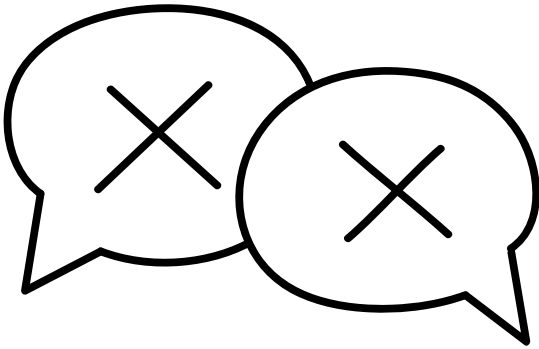
Employing strategies like red flag-spotting is an example of thinking critically about media. Being critical also means being willing to reflect on your own biases and blindspots and changing your media use over time to help you make more informed decisions. You can make different choices about the media you use, create, and share to help make media environments more inclusive and fair. This means being honest about how your own media choices affect yourself, others, and society.

REFLECT ON YOUR OWN AND OTHER PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOURS AND ACTIONS:



→ 4. MEDIA LITERACY AND MISINFORMATION: WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

Misinformation can make us feel uneasy about the digital media environments we use. But avoiding these media can mean we miss out on being connected to reliable information sources, getting updates from loved ones, or having easy access to entertainment. Learning more about misinformation, including how to live with it, means we can reduce its negative impact.



What does it mean to live with misinformation?

- Acknowledging that digital media environments can be confusing, complicated, and overwhelming
- Being aware that digital media is often driven by people and companies with different motives than our own
- Making strategic and effective decisions about what and who we give our attention to
- Knowing what questions to ask to help decide if content is reliable, fair, and well-informed
- Improving our media literacy over time by learning about new technologies and developing new digital skills.

HOW DOES MEDIA LITERACY FIT IN?

Taking a media literacy approach to addressing misinformation means we need to accept that we all have different social and cultural experiences, perspectives, behaviours, and biases. Acknowledging these can reduce the chance they'll stand in the way of us making well-informed decisions.

Being media literate also means understanding the limits of our own media knowledge and technology skills, knowing who we can turn to for help, and committing to updating our knowledge and skills over time. One important strategy when dealing with misinformation is being able to work out whether content is credible and valid.

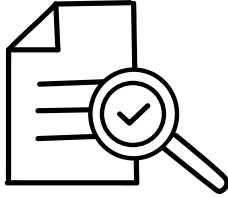
With the rapid adoption of AI, digital media are evolving even faster. Staying up to date on the latest media platforms and the technologies behind them can develop media literacy and help us respond to misinformation.

get ready

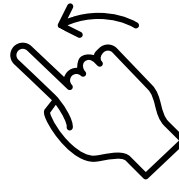


MEDIA LITERACY CAN HELP PEOPLE TO LIVE WITH MISINFORMATION BY SUPPORTING THEM TO:

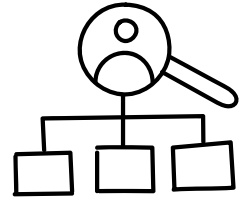
verify content
by checking
facts or
finding more
information



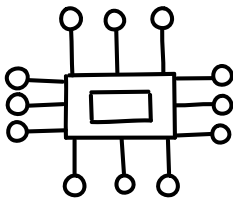
strategically
ignore content
that doesn't
serve them



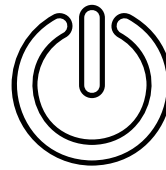
identify the
author and
publisher of
content



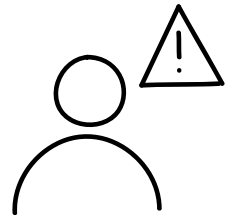
understand
how media
and
technologies
operate



make informed
decisions about
how and when
they use media
and technologies



recognise their
own biases,
limitations,
and emotional
responses to
information



Sometimes when people don't understand how media systems work, it can lead them to distrust all information sources, rather than approach them with curiosity. **That's why we need media literacy.**

Adult education programs delivered by community organisations, libraries, cultural institutions, schools and higher education providers are key in this lifelong learning process. This guide provides a starting point for anyone wanting to develop educational initiatives to help adults strengthen their media literacy.

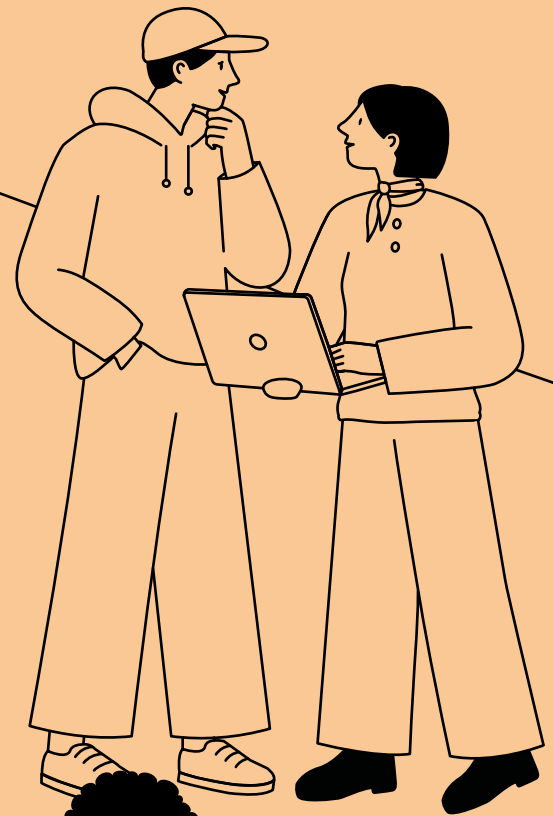
→ 5. THE 3C FRAMEWORK: BE CURIOUS, CRITICAL, AND CONFIDENT

Sharing media literacy skills and information with communities doesn't have to feel like rocket science. It can actually be a fun way to bring your community together. The 3C Framework was created to guide the development of programs that aim to help people successfully live with misinformation by encouraging them to be Curious, Critical, and Confident.

Each of the 3 Cs represents a different area of learning that can be used for workshops, resources, and activities. They can be addressed individually or combined, depending on the needs of different groups.

BE CURIOUS about media and technology and how people respond to these	BE CRITICAL about our own media use and the impact of media in society	BE CONFIDENT to support informed decision-making when using media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Knowing how and why misinformation is created, edited, and circulated in media environments → Understanding techniques of media manipulation → Understanding how bias, stereotypes, and prejudice influence how misinformation is produced. → Recognising the historic and current relationships among information, citizenship, democracy, and the role of media in society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Considering how our own and others' personal politics, biases, and emotions influence media engagement → Recognising our own and others' motivations for engaging with media and information → Asking questions about how our own media participation impacts other people and society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Investigating the information and media we encounter, including who produced, edited, or shared it and why → Making active decisions about our use of technology and changing security settings to protect our privacy → Analysing media and information to check for accuracy, fairness, and credibility → Creating and sharing media and information that is accurate, fair, responsible, and credible

The next section of this guide covers the impacts of media use and how our understanding of it can be used to respond to misinformation.



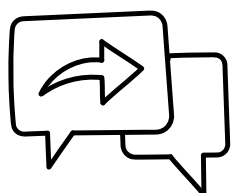
get on board

In the first part of this guide, we explored what misinformation is and how it spreads, as well as how, through media literacy actions, individuals and communities can navigate, prevent, and successfully live with it.

Now, it's time to build on this knowledge by learning more about how Australians navigate media and misinformation. This section covers handy tips to help you decide what to trust (or not trust) and spot, stop, and handle misinformation. By the end, you'll put this knowledge into practice with our Community Self-Assessment Tool – a tool designed to help you identify the areas where your community could benefit from strengthening its knowledge of misinformation, and what skills are needed to respond to it.



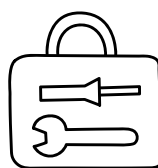
WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE 'GET ON BOARD' PACK:



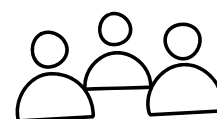
Responding to misinformation:
confidence vs ability



Mistrust cues:
how Australian adults
decide what to trust online



A toolkit to
navigate misinformation
confidently



Community
Self-Assessment Tool:
identify how you can
support your community to
navigate misinformation

→ 1. RESPONDING TO MISINFORMATION: CONFIDENCE VS ABILITY

We often explore the digital media world with the confidence that we can tell what information is accurate and what's misleading. Here's the catch: our confidence levels and skills don't always match. So, what happens when we end up mistaking misinformation for facts?

Research shows less than half of adult Australians feel confident distinguishing what's true and what's not true online. Many people are also overconfident in their own abilities.

A 2024 research study conducted by the team behind this guide evaluated the online information verification skills of more than 2000 Australian adults.

Participants were shown four examples of real world online information and asked to decide whether they included false or misleading claims. People could take their time and use the internet to inform their responses. What was found? The results on next page are striking.

Only 3% of adults

passed this test. The research found that most people made quick, snap decisions rather than asking questions about the source, the evidence, potential vested interests, and motivations. Many people didn't leave the source to check what others were saying about the claims being made (a technique called lateral reading).

40% of adults

who said they were confident in their ability to verify information online scored zero on the test. This means we can't rely on people's confidence as a good gauge of their ability to identify misinformation online: just because someone says they know how to spot misinformation, it doesn't mean they can do it. And even if they can verify information online, this doesn't mean they'll do it when it matters.

WHY IS KNOWING THIS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?

If you want to help your community navigate the world of misinformation, it's essential to understand how people see their own knowledge and skills – and what they hope to learn or need help with.

Most people who aren't confident in their ability to verify information online say that they are interested in learning more about how to spot misinformation online, avoid scams, and find reliable information sources. Here's the twist: people who are overconfident in their ability aren't interested in learning these topics, because they don't think they need any help. But all is not lost. The overconfident crowd actually want to know about media laws, policies, and how the media shapes our world.

This shows us that when we design media literacy initiatives, we need to understand people's:

- abilities, so we know their learning needs
- different learning interests and motivations.

Tip! Workshops, campaigns, learning resources, and other initiatives should always meet people where they're at. Find the angle that people want to learn about the most and utilise the formats that better respond to the profile, needs, and expectations of your community.

Sources:

Notley, T., Park, S., Thomson, T.J., Hourigan, A., Dezuanni, M. (2026, in press) Assessing the Relationship between Online Information Verification, Overconfidence, and Media Literacy Learning. Journal of Media Literacy Education. Preprint version. <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/jmle-preprints/50>

Park, S., Notley, T., Thomson, T. J., Hourigan, A., and Dezuanni, M. (2024). Online Misinformation in Australia: Adults' experiences, abilities, and responses. University of Canberra and Western Sydney University. <https://doi.org/10.60836/jpmm-dw04>

→ 2. MISTRUST CUES: HOW AUSTRALIAN ADULTS DECIDE WHAT TO TRUST ONLINE

When we browse social media, we're bombarded with claims from different sources, in different formats. It's information overload: way too much, way too fast. Our brains are not designed to cope with this flood of information, so to manage, we're forced to make split-second decisions about whether a post, video, or claim is trustworthy or not.

55 people were asked to track and document how they made decisions about online information over a one-week period. The findings show that they rely on mistrust and distrust cues to make these quick decisions.



MIS- AND DISTRUST CUES

Red and yellow flags



Mistrust cues:

work like a yellow flag we use to withhold trust in media or an information source, without making a final decision about it. This might lead us to ignore the media or investigate their claims further. Mistrust cues can support sceptical thinking.



Distrust cues:

work like a red flag that we use to decide that something can't be trusted, no matter what. Distrust cues may lead to cynical responses that stand in the way of media literacy.

When it comes to making a decision about what's untrustworthy, it's useful to know the difference between sceptical and cynical approaches to media and information sources.

Cynicism is closely associated with strong distrust. People assume the information can't be trusted, so they just reject it without a second thought. Some classics: "I don't trust anything on social media", or "All politicians are liars!" Of course, it's reasonable for us all to come to a firm decision about an unreliable media source – so long as we have done the work and can support this position. But here's the catch: if strong distrust becomes the default response, people might end up becoming resigned and apathetic, which leads to poorly informed decisions. That can happen when people rely on untested assumptions shaped by their worldview and personal biases, rather than properly evaluating the information at hand.

Scepticism, on the other hand, is where someone withholds trust rather than immediately deciding something is untrustworthy. They might say, "I'm not sure about this post, but I'm choosing to ignore it because it's not relevant to me." Or they might pause and ask questions like, "Who posted this and why?", "What is the evidence to support this claim?", and "What are reliable sources saying about this?"

REMEMBER ALEX?



A CYNICAL ALEX VS A SCEPTICAL ALEX: cultivating a curious but sceptical response

Remember Alex from the 'misinformation day' in Step 1 of this guide? Let's see how Alex might respond with cynicism or scepticism when faced with situations where they spot clickbait, notice inflammatory language, identify bias, or don't trust the source.

CLICKBAIT

Cynical: Alex decides that when a headline is exaggerated or misleading, it's 100% misinformation.

Sceptical: Alex understands that headlines are designed to grab their attention, so they pause and first check whether the content supports the claims that are being made before making their decision about its trustworthiness.

INFLAMMATORY OR HYPERBOLIC LANGUAGE

Cynical: Alex thinks all exaggerated claims are 'nonsense' and 'just trying to get a rise out of them' so rather than checking it, they immediately dismiss the content as unreliable.

Sceptical: Alex recognises why some content can be inflammatory or exaggerated – to provoke strong feelings like anger or to trigger quick reactions or responses. Alex pauses and checks whether the claims are supported by evidence, investigating it further rather than dismissing content entirely.

PERCEIVED BIAS

Cynical: Alex believes that some sources have particular motivations or incentives that always influence their content, so they choose to ignore anything that those sources share.

Sceptical: Alex recognises that sources have different motivations or perspectives, but uses this as a reason to look for supporting evidence or other viewpoints from different sources to try and get a complete picture.

LACK OF TRUST IN THE SOURCE

Cynical: Alex totally ignores some media outlets due to their reputation, or their perception of them.

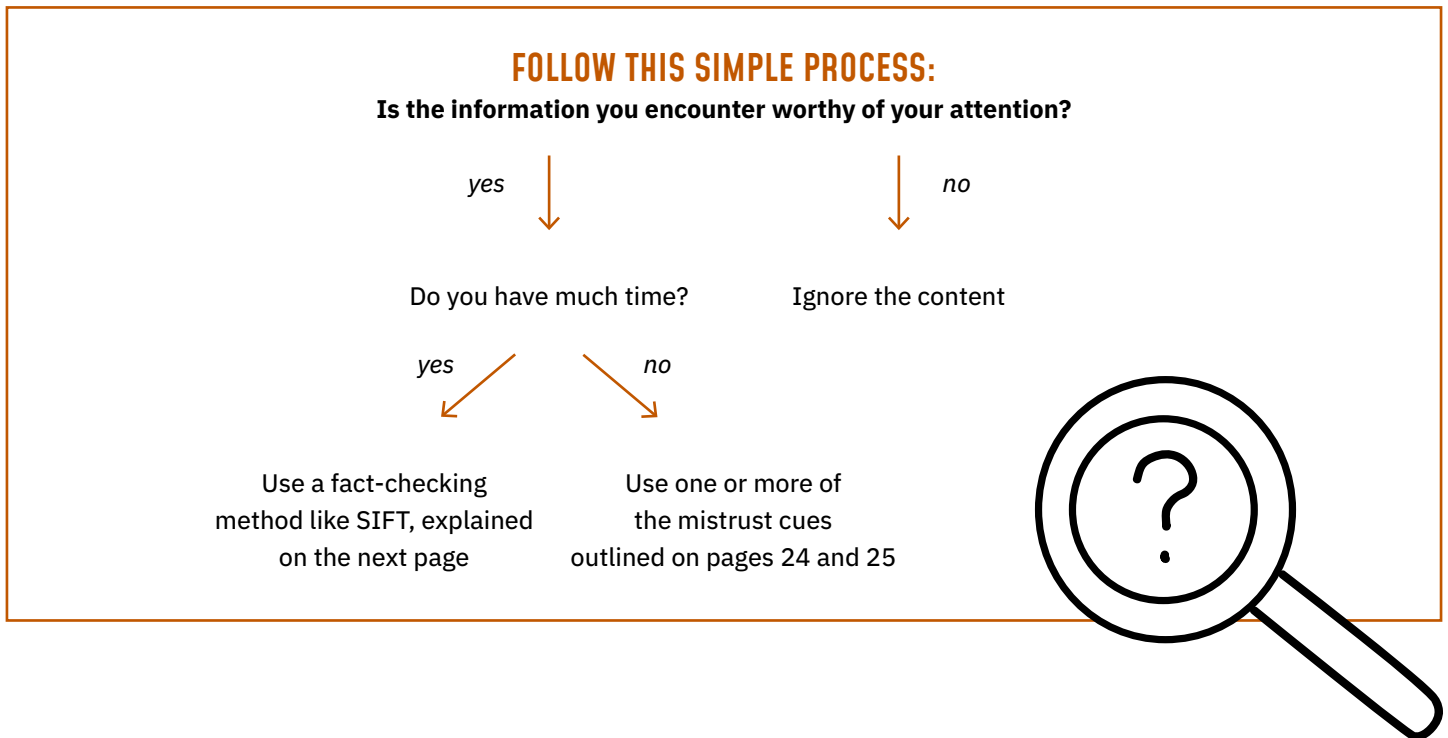
Sceptical: Alex chooses to engage with some media outlets more often. But they still cautiously engage with the media outlets they think aren't as trustworthy or reputable by checking their claims against other reliable sources to verify them.

Source: Notley, T., Hourigan, A., Park, S., & Thomson, T.J. (2026). Mis- and distrust cues: Investigating how people determine who and what to trust online. Media International Australia. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X261465717>

Park, S., Notley, T., Thomson, T. J., Hourigan, A., & Dezuanni, M. (2026). Mistrust as a precondition for critical thinking and media literacy. Information, Communication & Society, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2026.2678363>

→ 3. A QUICK PROCESS TO NAVIGATE MISINFORMATION CONFIDENTLY

Stay curious, even when you're short on time. You can't always fact-check every claim or media story out there. A simple process can help you make informed decisions, so that depending on the time and resources you have available, you're prepared when you spot red flags and encounter suspected misinformation.



BEFORE YOU START,

make sure you've got the basics mastered:

- ✓ Are you following accounts and sites that serve your interests, and already have some level of trust?
- ✓ Have you checked your settings and made sure you're comfortable with what you're sharing with third-party platforms?
- ✓ Are there any accounts you should unfollow because they're known for spreading false or harmful information?

WHAT IS THE SIFT METHOD?

The 4-step SIFT method – **Stop, Investigate the Source, Find better coverage, and Trace claims** – can help you figure out if online content is trustworthy. Even if you can't use all the steps every time, try a few if you have a little more time, or if the content is especially important to your life and decisions.

THE 4-STEP SIFT METHOD

1. Stop: before you share or read/watch something in depth, take a moment and ask:

- ☐ Is this media inciting any strong emotional responses in me?
- ☐ Do I know anything about this topic or the source that shared this?

Remember: *If the content stirs up strong emotions, that's a red flag, and you probably need basic verification.*

Tip! *Want to develop greater skills? Read about the techniques of media manipulation on pages 13 to 15 of this guide.*

2. Investigate the source: take a moment to look up who has published this media and ask yourself:

- ☐ What can I find out about the author, or the creator/s?
- ☐ Do they hold any expertise on this topic?

Remember: *Every creator has their own interests and motives. Always ask yourself – what's their angle, and why are they saying what they're saying?*

Tip! *Want to develop greater skills? Read about platforms and their various motives on pages 15 and 16 of this guide.*

3. Find better coverage: verifying information is always beneficial. Ask yourself:

- ☐ Can I find other sources I trust on this topic?
- ☐ Do these other sources support, challenge or debunk the claim/s being made?

Remember: *Comparing different sources can help you develop a critical understanding and identify different perspectives on a single topic.*

Tip! *Want to know how others do (or don't do) this? Read about how more than 2000 Aussies in the Adult Media Literacy Test rated their online verification skills, on page 23 of this guide.*

4. Trace claims, quotes and media: if the content references a quote or research, try to locate the original source. Ask yourself:

- ☐ Can I follow any links in the content and find the original sources of any claims to see whether the information was fairly represented?
- ☐ Can I trust this if I am not being told the original source of any claims being made?

Remember: *With so many creators using AI tools that can make up fake quotes and sources, it's more important than ever to double-check claims before sharing or making decisions based on information you have found online.*

Tip! *Want to develop greater skills? Revisit the 3C Framework on page 20 of this guide.*

→ 5. COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL: IDENTIFY HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY TO NAVIGATE MISINFORMATION

If you've made it this far, you're ready to start supporting your community in understanding and navigating misinformation. By now, you've got a deeper understanding of misinformation: why it matters, different ways people respond to it, and how other Australian adults currently perceive and navigate it. Finally, you've also learned why media literacy matters for responding to misinformation.

But how do you create community programs that truly help people with misinformation? How do you figure out what your community needs or what support and resources are missing?

Before you plan a session or create resources, remember: every community is different. There's no magic recipe – what works for one group might not work for another. That's why one-size-fits-all approaches rarely work. Because of the uniqueness of your community, you need a flexible approach to adult media literacy initiatives that can better respond to the different needs, capabilities, habits, and behaviours of diverse communities.

This tool will help you:

1. Understand what your community cares about and how they are exposed to misinformation
2. Assess the profile and particularities of your community
3. Set your goals and desired impact
4. Identify the formats that work best for your community
5. Identify the resources you need to implement your ideas
6. Map potential partners and collaborators
7. Set a timeline for action.

Work through the questions in the tool and add your responses to the 'Details' column. You can also note early ideas in the 'Action' column, or return to these after reading the final section of this guide. If you don't have all the answers yet, that's okay: starting to think about your community's needs and available resources is an important first step. The final section of this guide – 'Get it done' – provides resources and inspiration to help you turn these ideas into action.



Download the Community self-assessment tool:

[Word Version](#)

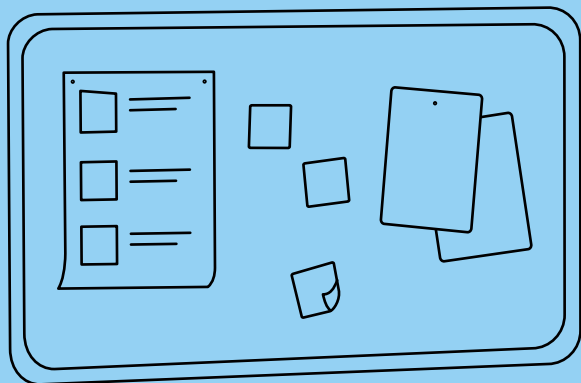
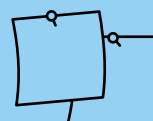
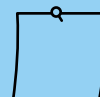
[Excel version](#)

Tip! If you can, set up a session with some community members or run a quick survey to get the info you need for sections 1 and 2 in the self-assessment tool. Asking people directly is the best way to get accurate answers.

PREVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL			
	Questions	Details	Action
1.	Understand what your community cares about and how they encounter misinformation		
1.1	What does your community care about? What are your community's 'pain points'? (e.g. the environment, elections, gender portrayals.)		
1.2	What types of misinformation have you heard about from, or among, the community in the last six months? (e.g. election rumours, scam reports, AI-generated content, community rumours, misinformation campaigns.)		
1.3	Where are people encountering this content - have they mentioned particular platforms or sources? (e.g. Facebook groups, YouTube, particular news media sites.)		
1.4	On a scale from 1 to 10, estimate the level of awareness and knowledge of your community about how misinformation works and spreads.		
1.5	On a scale from 1 to 10, estimate the level of readiness of your community to respond to this situation of misinformation.		
2.	Assess the profile and particularities of your community		
2.1	Are there particular groups who are asking for support in navigating misinformation? (e.g. particular ages, occupations, cultural groups.)		
2.2	Are there particular groups who <i>aren't</i> asking for help, but probably need it?		
2.3	Are there any specific considerations that need to be taken into account? (e.g. language, literacy, or disability access.)		
3.	Set the goals and desired impact		
3.1	What do you think is the goal of a media literacy initiative that builds the skills of your community to respond to misinformation? (e.g. build the capacity of the community to spot climate-related misinformation, build the capacity of the community to perform a basic verification process, support the community to help them identify how they are exposed to misinformation.)		
3.2	What should the impact of the initiative look like? What results would you hope to see six months from now? (e.g. fewer scam reports? Requests for follow-up sessions? Other organisations asking to co-host?)		

PREVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

	Questions	Details	Action
4.	Identify the formats that work best for your community		
4.1	What formats would work for your target groups? (e.g. workshops, community sessions, videos, posters.)		
4.2	What specifications need to be considered for the implementation phase? (e.g. dates/times, in-person or online, printed or digital.)		
5.	Identify the resources you need to implement your ideas		
5.1	What resources and logistics do you need to implement your idea (e.g. rooms, equipment, and other supplies you might need to deliver initiatives), and do you have access to these? Perhaps you can work in partnership with people who have these facilities, such as local council, community centers, libraries, universities or schools?		
5.2	From the list of needs, what do you have access to already, and what do you need to find access to?		
5.3	Do you have any budget to deliver these initiatives? If not, are there possibilities to access the resources?		
6.	Map potential partners and collaborators		
6.1	Are there other individuals in your organisation, or other organisations in your community who can help you understand more about how misinformation is impacting your community? Who could you partner with?		
6.2	Which local groups or leaders are trusted by some of these groups? (e.g. faith leaders, school groups, seniors' clubs, community centres, educators.)		
6.3	Are there local groups or organisations who can help you with delivering skills and expertise, or can assist with groups who may require extra assistance? (e.g. other languages.)		
6.4	What other programs or events are already running in your community, or online, that may address some misinformation concerns? (e.g. digital literacy classes, tech help classes). Are there any gaps that your misinformation initiative can help fill?		
7.	Timeline: What's next?		
7.1	Using bullet points, draft a tentative timeline for the implementation of your initiative.		



03

get it done

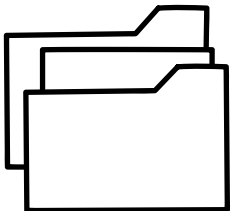
You've reached the final step of this guide, which means it's time to put everything into practice and plan and implement your own community misinformation response initiatives, to help your community navigate misinformation successfully.

Remember that each community's needs are different, and what may work for one group won't be ideal for another. That's why this section features inspiring cases of media literacy initiatives and programs. Along with these tried-and-tested initiatives, you'll also find a selection of helpful resources from around the world.

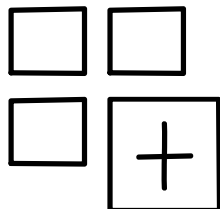
Finally, this section introduces an evaluation tool to help you measure the effectiveness of your community initiatives, establish collaborative and collective processes, and continue strengthening your community's capacity to successfully respond to misinformation. Are you ready?



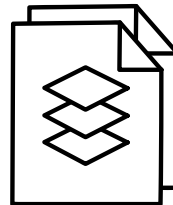
WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE 'GET IT DONE' PACK:



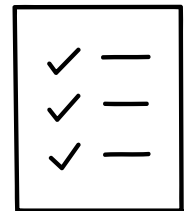
Inspiring case studies and examples of media literacy initiatives



A collection of practical resources



A 'Community Plan' template you can adapt for your own initiative



Community Evaluation Tool: identify the effectiveness of your initiative

→ 1. CASE STUDIES FROM AROUND AUSTRALIA

Do you want to support a community or group to identify and respond to misinformation but you're not sure where to start? No problem! The following examples from other organisations may help inspire or inform your initiative. These mini case studies show the range of ways intermediaries such as educators, librarians, and community organisations can implement programs to

suit their community's interests, goals, and needs. You'll find a brief overview of each organisation's goals, target audience, and the activities they have rolled out. The good news is that in many cases, you can adapt these activities to suit your community's needs. Want to find out more? Simply follow the links, and you'll be able to read the full case studies online.

CASE 1: THE MATTER OF FACTS WORKSHOPS

Library workshops that boost the people's confidence in spotting misinformation. By the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and the Australian Broadcasting Association (ABC)

Coinciding with the launch of the ABC TV documentary series *The Matter of Facts*, featuring award-winning journalist Hamish McDonald, this complementary workshop program was led by ABC Impact and developed collaboratively with ALIA, Western Sydney University, ABC Radio, ABC News Verify, and ABC Education.



Tip! The Matter of Facts workshop hosting resources are available for free by application to the ABC and the University of Canberra.



get the full case study [here](#)



Audience: Adults 25+ and seniors



Activity: In-person workshops delivered through public libraries



Time: 2 hours per workshop

Results:

- Participants reported feeling more confident spotting scams and misleading information.
- Facilitators reported that the workshops enhanced their skills and capacity to deliver such programs in their community.
- Over 100 The Matter of Facts workshops were delivered in 2026 or are planned for early 2027.

CASE 2: MIS+DIS

Adult media literacy workshops that provide people with practical tools they can use in their workplaces. By the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

Mis+Dis is an interactive scenario-based workshop designed for participants in the workplace. It aims to provide space for participants to learn key media literacy concepts, explore personal media habits, and develop practical strategies for identifying misinformation. The workshop provides participants with tools they can take away and use in their workplaces and in their lives more broadly. Participants have the opportunity to practice having difficult conversations about how to deal with misinformation to build their confidence to do so within their everyday lives.



Tip! Can be adapted to suit most workplaces.



Audience: Adults in the workplace



Activity: Small group workshops



Time: 1 hour per workshop

Participants improved their confidence in:

- identifying misinformation
- sharing strategies to navigate misinformation with colleagues, friends and family.



get the full case study [here](#)

CASE 3: 'QUESTION OF THE DAY'

An anti mis- and disinformation campaign raising awareness before an election. By the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) at Old Parliament House

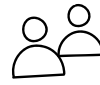
In the lead-up to the 2025 Australian federal election, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House (MoAD) published a social media civics education campaign designed to address mis- and disinformation and its impact on democracy. The campaign comprised 'Question of the Day' cards, which were used to prompt discussions; social media content; short-form videos; and long-form articles on the MoAD website.



Tip! 'Question of the Day' card decks can be adapted for use in classrooms, or used for prompts in workshops.



get the full case study [here](#)



Audience: Adults 25-55+ with high levels of misinformation awareness, but low levels of confidence in engaging with it



Activity: Online campaign: videos and written content complemented by a physical card deck: 'Question of the Day' cards, which were used to prompt discussions



Time: Self-paced

Results:

- Resources continue to be of interest to visitors to the MoAD website, suggesting that the materials are well received and engaging.
- The campaign reached more than 2.2 million people in just 2 months.

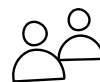
CASE 4: MAKING SENSE OF MISINFORMATION AND THE MEDIA WORKSHOPS

A workshop series to increase understanding of journalism practices. By ABC Education

This series of three workshops, followed by an industry panel, was developed by ABC Education with support from Western Sydney University and Parramatta City Council Library. It was designed to increase knowledge about how newsrooms operate including fact-checking processes and journalists' civic responsibilities, while providing a space for participants to discuss their personal experiences and concerns related to misinformation.

Results:

- There were improvements in participant perceptions, ability, and confidence engaging with media.
- Participants were given an opportunity to learn from journalists.



Audience: 18-25 year olds



Activity: Workshops + industry panel



Time: Four sessions, 1.5 hours each (can be modified)



Tip! Materials can be appropriate for 15+, or adapted for older age groups.



get the full case study [here](#)

→ 2. INSPIRATION AND RESOURCES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

Looking for more ways to get those creative juices flowing? Or, perhaps you're after some activities or resources to use within your own initiative? In this section, you'll find more information about what other organisations around the world are doing to help their communities live with misinformation, with some offering free downloadable resources like videos, activity print outs, and more.

SIFT

The SIFT method – introduced in section 2 of this guide – is a strategy for teenage and adult audiences to evaluate online content. Developed by US digital literacy expert Mike Caulfield, the SIFT method can help people analyse information.

The University of Chicago website contains an overview of SIFT, as well as links to related resources.



Read more [here](#)

ABC EDUCATION VIDEOS

Media literacy academic Dr Aimee Hourigan covers misinformation, bias, the value of artificial intelligence, and more, in this free five-part video series created for high school students by Australia's national broadcaster.



Watch the videos [here](#)

THE MATTER OF FACTS: SHORT CLIPS FOR USE IN CLASSROOMS

The ABC has curated several short clips for teachers to use in classrooms to introduce students to key media literacy issues.



Watch the clips [here](#)

THE MATTER OF FACTS

This three-part documentary series, presented by ABC broadcast journalist Hamish Macdonald, investigates misinformation and the technology platforms that drive its spread. It's suited for both teenage and adult audiences, and is available in Australia on ABC iView.



Watch the documentary series [here](#)

LOKI'S LOOP ESCAPE ROOM GAMES

These escape room games, produced by the Center for an Informed Public at the University of Washington (US), aim to develop critical thinking and investigation skills. Although designed for schools, they could be adapted for use in library and community contexts.



Explore the games [here](#)

THE GLASS ROOM MISINFORMATION EDITION EXHIBITION

This digital exhibition by Tactical Tech features a series of animations, visualisations, and apps that explore what misinformation is, why it's shared, and how it spreads. Visitors of the exhibition also learn about the role we the users and consumers play in the way information flows.



Find out more [here](#)

MEDIAWISE FOR SENIORS

This online course and short videos teach seniors how to tell what's true and false online. The resources were developed by Poynter, a US-based nonprofit media institute.



Explore [here](#)

CIVIC ONLINE REASONING

These online resources were developed by the Digital Inquiry Group, a nonprofit with links to the renowned US-based research group, Stanford History Education Group. Resources include lesson plans and videos primarily targeting high school and university students, although they can be suitable for other audiences.



Find out more [here](#)

NEWSWISE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Guardian Foundation's (UK) NewsWise program offers lesson plans for school students aged 7-11, to help them learn news literacy skills. There are also news literacy tips and activities designed for libraries, plus resources for families to use at home.



Find out more [here](#)

→ 3. ACTIVITY PLAN

You can use this plan as a template to create short sessions focused on specific topics related to misinformation. This template is designed for a standard 60-minute experience and can be adapted to your specific context.

This structure follows the ADIDS approach, a structured experiential learning and adult-education framework. It guides participants through a logical flow from practical experience to conceptual mastery.

This activity plan includes:

- Activity and Discussion (part 1)
- Input and Deepening (parts 2 and 3)
- Synthesis (part 4)

PART 1: OPENING

/ 10 minutes

Part 1: Opening / 10 minutes

- Briefly introduce the session topic. This is a good moment to explain what misinformation is and how it spreads.
- Give participants space to start thinking about the topic and share their views using an open-ended, interactive exercise. There are no right or wrong answers.

GET INSPIRED: INTERACTIVE EXERCISES

Spectrogram:

Participants physically agree or disagree with statements in the room.

Instructions:

1. Use tape or another marker to create a line across the room. One end should be labeled 'totally agree,' the other 'totally disagree.' The space in between forms a spectrum, with the middle as 'undecided' or 'neutral.'

2. Read one statement at a time (no more than three total) and ask participants to position themselves along the spectrum based on how much they agree or disagree. Here are some example statements:
 - "I'm exposed to misinformation on a daily basis."
 - "I feel overwhelmed with the amount of information out there."
 - "With AI it is more difficult to distinguish what is real from what is not."
3. Between each statement and positioning, ask a few participants to describe why they chose their positions. Ideally select different participants each time (to get the most people to talk) and focus on people on opposite ends of the spectrum.

Storytelling:

Share a story related to the topic. This could be your own experience or one inspired by the materials (e.g., a Misinformation Day sheet or stories from the Platforms and People Triad in section 1 of this guide). Ask participants if they relate to it and how it makes them feel.

Ask questions:

- Ask about the participants' personal experiences with the topic.
- Ask a more speculative question (e.g. "What would you do if your favourite media or content creator shares information that...?").
- Ask questions in the form of a poll and review the collection of results together.

PART 2: GROUP WORK

/ 20 minutes

Group work with the 'A misinformation day' vs. 'A Curious, Critical, and Confident day'

1. Explain that every day, we are all exposed to misinformation through various channels and formats. Emphasise that our reactions are crucial – they can either spread or stop misinformation.
2. Briefly show examples from 'A misinformation day' vs. 'A Curious, Critical, and Confident day' (in section 1 of this guide) as an introduction to the activity.
3. Divide participants into small groups and give them blank sheets of paper. First, ask them to have them identify moments during the day when they could encounter misinformation. Next, ask them to brainstorm ways to avoid spreading it.
4. Give groups enough time to work on the activity.
5. Bring everyone back together and have each group share a couple of misinformation moments and how they might respond to avoid spreading misinformation.
6. Debrief with the groups, and share information about how Australians typically assess and respond to information online, including mistrust cues and the difference between being cynical and being sceptical.

**GET INSPIRED:
CRITICAL QUESTIONS****You can use thought-provoking questions from the Misinformation Triad in section 1 – Stories, Platforms, and People – for discussion, such as:**

- What are the channels where misinformation spreads more easily?
- Why do you think you are presented with certain information?
- How are my previous beliefs and biases influencing the way I assess information?
- What are the red flags I'm noticing in the content? Are these perceptions accurate, or are they just coming from my own beliefs?

PART 3: ACTIVITY

/ 20 minutes

Using the SIFT method

1. Explain the SIFT method briefly.
Select a series of media examples – news articles, posts, or other content – and distribute them among the participants.
2. Ask participants to apply one or more steps of the SIFT method as a response to the information.
3. At the end, ask them to share their responses voluntarily.

**GET INSPIRED:
CRITICAL QUESTIONS****You can use thought-provoking questions from the Misinformation Triad – Stories, Platforms, and People – for discussion, such as:**

- What techniques does this story use to communicate? Does the story feel sensationalist?
- What conventions (such as genre, style, or language) does this story use to inform, entertain, or persuade?
- What does the story make you feel? Do you feel an urge to share or like it?

PART 4: WRAP-UP

/ 10 minutes

1. Stand or sit in a circle and conduct a short energiser activity like stretching, or throwing a ball to catch the participants' attention and centre them again.
2. Ask the participants what they've learned and if they have any additional comments or questions. You can use the questions from the evaluation tool.
3. Ask if there is anything particular they would like to learn more about. This may lead you to explore another topic in future sessions.
4. Summarise the main takeaways from the overall session.
5. Thank everyone for their participation!

→ 4. EVALUATION TOOL

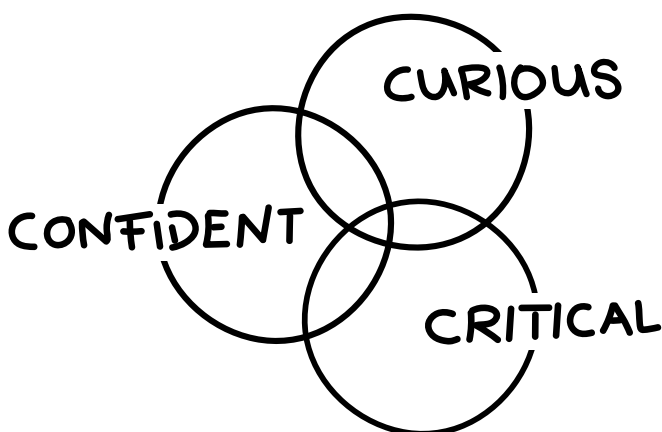
Media literacy plays a crucial role in building communities' capacity to learn how to live with misinformation. Participants who engage in media literacy activities to develop **curiosity**, **critical questioning**, and **confidence** will be better equipped to recognise, question, and respond to misinformation in the media they encounter.

After you implement your media literacy activity, initiative, or program, it is crucial to measure the impact on your community's understanding and skills. Did your initiative increase the knowledge level of your community about how misinformation works and spreads? Is your community better equipped to spot misinformation? You can identify the impact and progress using the handy evaluation tool included in this section.

But first, here's more information about the tool's components:

CAPABILITIES

The evaluation tool is designed to identify how your initiative has impacted a skill, or ability to address misinformation. For this process, we will use the capabilities included in the 3C Framework, which includes the dimensions: Be Curious, Be Critical, and Be Confident. Note that your initiatives most likely would cover or aim to impact between one and three of the capabilities in the next column.



Download the Evaluation tool:

[Word Version](#)

[Excel version](#)

Be Curious:

- Know how and why misinformation is created, edited and circulated in media environments
- Understand techniques of media manipulation
- Understand how bias, stereotypes and prejudice influence how misinformation is produced
- Recognise the historic and current relationships among information, citizenship, democracy and the role of media in society.

Be Critical:

- Consider how your own and others' personal politics, biases and emotions influence media engagement
- Recognise your own and others' motivations for engaging with media and information
- Ask questions about how your own media participation impacts other people and society.

Be Confident:

- Investigate the information and media you encounter, including who produced, edited or shared it and why, when warranted
- Analyse media and information to check for accuracy, fairness and credibility
- Create, adapt, and share media and information that are accurate, fair, responsible and credible
- Make active decisions about your use of technology and change security settings to protect your privacy.

INDICATORS

Indicators are clear signs that can show you whether your initiative has achieved its desired outcome. They help you identify what to look for or measure to assess your initiative.

We can collect data to measure the impact of initiatives in relation to the following indicators:

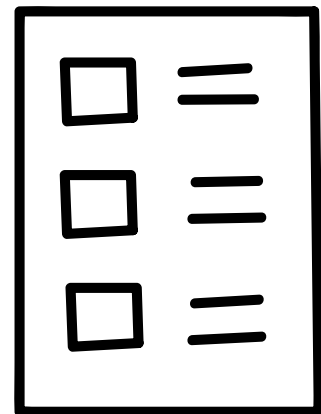
- **Knowledge:** critical awareness and understanding of the media and information environment
- **Confidence:** self-assurance in media knowledge and capabilities
- **Attitudes:** thoughts, feelings or views underpinning media and information engagement - particularly moving from cynicism to healthy scepticism
- **Skills:** capabilities to actively evaluate, use, create and share media and information for an array of purposes and outcomes
- **Behaviours:** actions and practices involving media and information that have an impact on society.

Source:
Ofcom. (2026). A toolkit for evaluating media literacy interventions:
<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/media-literacy/toolkit>

DATA COLLECTION

Finally, there are different ways you can collect data to measure the success of your initiatives. The evaluation and observation formats may include:

- Questionnaires
- Pre- and post-activity surveys
- Focus groups or other small group discussions
- Interviews
- Observations of initiative activities
- Data generated by an initiative activity (such as comments made on Post-It notes)
- Content created through an initiative
- Interactive feedback captured throughout an initiative (for example, participants may make comments at the end of an activity).



THE MISINFORMATION AND MEDIA LITERACY EVALUATION TOOL

Now that you understand the various capabilities, indicators, and approaches to measuring change and impact, it's time to apply them to your own initiative and community. This evaluation tool provides examples of how to assess change and success across different capabilities and indicators.

The tool guides you through each capability and indicator, along with potential methods for measuring change. You may find that some sections are particularly relevant to your initiative. Keep in mind that more than one capability and indicator may apply to your activity.

When you're ready to evaluate your own misinformation and media literacy initiatives, use this tool as a guide to identify the capabilities and indicators you want to explore, and to consider appropriate ways of measuring change and impact.

Tip! Remember that you can use different ways to evaluate the impact, like questionnaires, surveys, or focus groups.

PREVIEW OF THE EVALUATION TOOL

BE CURIOUS

CAPABILITY	INDICATOR	WAYS TO MEASURE CHANGE
Know how and why misinformation is created, edited and circulated in media environments.	Participants gain knowledge about how misinformation is created, edited and circulated in media environments.	Participants complete a 'spot the trick' activity by reviewing different examples of misinformation in the media and identifying misleading techniques. For example, they might examine a social media post with a sensational headline and discuss what clues suggest it may not be trustworthy. Keep a tally of how many participants are able to complete the activity correctly.
Understand techniques of media manipulation.	Participants gain knowledge about how different media can aim to manipulate audiences.	At the end of an activity, ask participants to go to one side of the room to choose a statement they agree with: either - 'I learnt something new today', or 'I'm still confused' or somewhere in between. Ask for volunteers to explain their choice. Record participants' responses.
Understand how bias, stereotypes, and prejudice influence how misinformation is produced.	Participants gain new knowledge and develop confidence as they learn about bias, stereotypes, and prejudice and how these relate to misinformation.	Participants complete a pre- and post-test to measure their understanding of how stereotypes relate to misinformation. For example, before and after the workshop, they might analyse a media post containing stereotypical representations and explain how these may contribute to misleading or inaccurate ideas. Ask participants to self-report on the extent to which their confidence has improved following the completion of the workshop.
Recognise the historic and current relationships among information, citizenship, democracy and the role of media in society.	Participants gain new knowledge about the history of information and its relationship to citizenship and democracy.	Towards the end of a workshop, conduct a group discussion about misinformation and citizenship. Facilitators can gauge and record the extent to which participants are able to discuss the topic in a meaningful way.

BE CRITICAL

CAPABILITY	INDICATOR	WAYS TO MEASURE CHANGE
Consider how your own and others' personal politics, biases and emotions influence media engagement.	Participants reflect on their attitude to personal politics, bias and emotion and how these relate to media engagement and misinformation.	Complete an anonymous survey at the end of the session asking participants to respond to a statement on a scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. For example: "Following the workshops, I am more aware of how my own emotions or beliefs can shape what I believe online", or "Following the workshops, I feel more confident in identifying misinformation that relies on stereotypes".

Recognise your own and others' motivations for engaging with media and information.	Participants notice that people can react differently to the same piece of media (have different attitudes), and start to think about what shapes those different reactions – including their own.	The facilitator writes a reflection at the end of the session, considering how open participants were to understanding other people's perspectives.
Ask questions about how your own media participation impacts other people and society.	Participants reflect on the attitudes they bring with them as they participate with various media and how this impacts other people.	At the end of a session, ask participants to write brief, anonymous reflections on the topic for facilitators to collect and read.

BE CONFIDENT

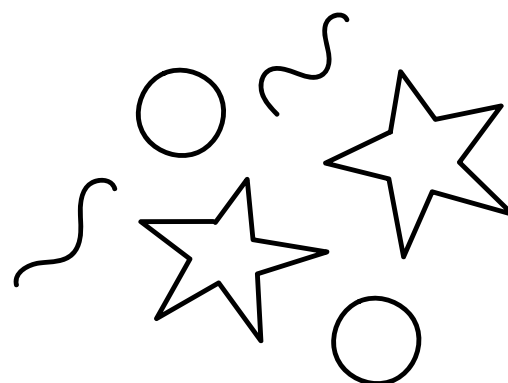
CAPABILITY	INDICATOR	WAYS TO MEASURE CHANGE
Investigate the information and media you encounter, including who produced, edited or shared it and why.	Participants learn new skills and develop confidence as they investigate the information and media they use, including who produced, edited or shared it and why.	Check for understanding. Following practice examples, ask participants to answer three short questions related to a misinformation example (social media post or article): 1. Who do you think made or shared this? 2. Why might they have made or shared it? 3. What claims are being made? 4. How can the claims included be verified? 5. Who may be harmed by this example? Keep a record of how successful the participants were.
Analyse media and information to check for accuracy, fairness and credibility.	Participants learn new skills to analyse media for accuracy, fairness and credibility.	During a workshop focused on media analysis, observe how successfully participants use specific skills. Keep a record of how successful the participants were.
Create, adapt, and share media and information that are accurate, fair, responsible and credible.	Participants learn new skills and develop confidence as they create and share media stories that are accurate, fair, responsible and credible.	Undertake a creative workshop with a focus on the creation of media stories, for a specific audience and purpose. Facilitators can make judgments about the success of the stories. Ask participants to self-report on the extent to which their confidence to create fair and accurate stories has improved following the completion of the workshop.
Make active decisions about your use of technology and changing security settings to protect your privacy.	Participants change their behaviour related to technology use, including security and privacy.	Following a workshop about privacy and security, ask participants to self-report about if they plan to change their behaviour using a survey or discussion. Follow up one week or one month following the survey to assess what has changed.

Tip! When you've done your evaluation, find your community self-assessment tool (baseline) from section 2 of this guide. Compare some of your results to identify progress from the baseline and the final evaluation.

Questions from the self-assessment tool (baseline)	STEP 1.	STEP 2
On a scale from 1 to 10, categorise the level of awareness and knowledge of your community about how misinformation works and spreads.	Review the answers gathered in the self-assessment tool.	Compare the initial answer with the results and feedback collected through the evaluation tool. Does your community express a higher level of awareness, knowledge, and readiness? If so, your initiative is a success.
On a scale from 1 to 10, categorise the level of readiness of your community to respond to this situation of misinformation.		

→ 5. MOVING FORWARD

You've armed yourself with a valuable set of skills and strategies to help your community deal with misinformation in a curious, critical, and confident way. We hope this guide has helped you understand the role misinformation plays in our world, and how media literacy education can help communities recognise, navigate and respond to it.



Congratulations!

You have successfully completed this media literacy journey.
Let's continue working together to help communities respond
to misinformation.

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Australian Library and
Information Association



Education

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AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY



OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE



NATIONAL FILM
AND SOUND ARCHIVE
OF AUSTRALIA



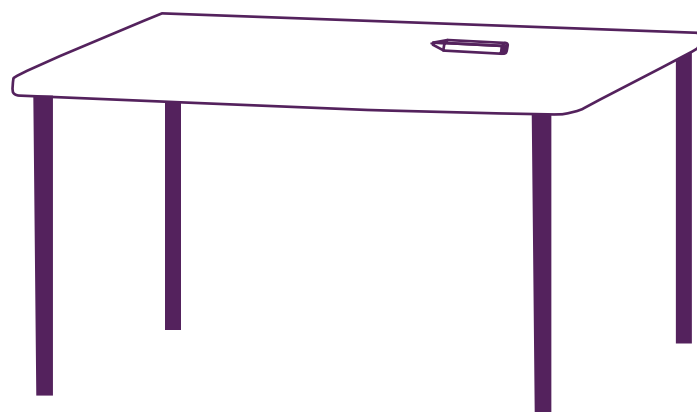
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Dezuanni, M., Notley, T., Tutkaluk, A., Hourigan, A. (2026).
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Western Sydney University, Queensland University of Technology.