

Learn to Discern



Media Literacy:
Trainer's Manual



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How-To Guide

Principles

Learn to Discern training principles

This curriculum is about changing how we consume media, not what we consume

It's about skill building, not prescribing a list of "good" or "bad" information sources to participants, or to criticize their choice of news outlets. Instead, we are equipping them with the skills and tools to judge the veracity of the content they read and to independently draw accurate conclusions about outlets' reliability.

Find common ground

People have different views - acknowledge it, and leave your own political views outside the room. Politics may come up from time to time, and one of your jobs is to keep the participants' minds focused on the task at hand - namely, improving their ability to discern good information and good sources. Keep them on task, and don't try to convince others of your own point of view. You are creating a team of watchdogs who will be leading the fight against misinformation and manipulation.

Create a brave space

Value everyone's ideas and inputs without judgements. All of us have biases and stereotypes. We all need to reflect individually on these and try to better understand how our biases and preferences may create blind spots. We are here today to learn how to recognize them. People need to feel ready to learn - and they can't learn in Fight or Flight mode.

Choose wisely

There's a lot of material here - we don't expect anyone to teach it from beginning to end! Instead, choose the modules that will work best for your audience and the time you have. To think about what works best for your audience, read the rest of this "Principles" section. To consider what will work best for your time frame, see the "Choosing lessons" section below.

General training principles

IREX strives to meet the following principles in all its trainings - please keep them in mind throughout the course.

THE TRAINING SHOULD BE:



Learner-Centered. A learner-centered training is an environment that pays careful attention to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that participants individually bring to the space. (National Research Council. 2000). This means that no two trainings will ever be identical.



Inclusion Sensitive. Our training audiences represent different geographic regions and ethnic groups, speak different languages, belong to different faiths, and are different genders and sexual orientations. The immense diversity among participants requires us to ensure that every participant is able and empowered to equally participate and contribute. Inclusion sensitive trainings acknowledge that diverse participants bring different experiences and perspectives to a training that can enrich the training experience for all. Trust and safety are essential.¹



Actionable. Actionable trainings focus on knowledge, skills, and attitudes that have a practical utility and will help participants make an impact.



Experiential. Experiential learning is “learning by doing.” Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is a holistic, cyclical process that emphasizes that effective learning occurs when direct experience is tied to personal reflection, opportunities to make relevant connections to the experience, and the ability to demonstrate the appropriate use of the knowledge or skill.



Active. A form of experiential learning, active training enables a participant to engage with training content in an interactive manner. What distinguishes active training is that it extends beyond “learning by doing” and uses formal training components to shape and support a participant’s learning processes. Activities are designed so that the participants acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes rather than simply receiving them.



Measurable. Measurable trainings use learning objectives to develop appropriate evaluation plans and techniques that help extract learning which can be applied to training design and delivery.

¹ We encourage you to expand your understanding of inclusion by taking this short course: <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/critical-practices-for-antibias-education-classroom-culture>

Adult learner principles

And these are particular principles for teaching adults - again, please keep these in mind:

Adults need to be involved in their own learning.

Encourage participants to self-evaluate and assess their own learning and performance.

Where possible, provide opportunities for participants to design their individual learning experience (i.e. through projects they choose and design).

Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.

Provide opportunities for learners to reflect upon and share their existing knowledge and experience.

Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.

Make a connection between the learning content and each participant's long-term professional or personal goals.

Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.

Share examples and stories that relate the learning content to participant's current challenges or ask participants to share their own examples².

² Adapted from Knowles, M. S. (1984). *Andragogy in action: applying principles of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Choosing lessons

We recommend you **always** include lesson 1A1, Introduction.

You are the designer of your training! You likely know and understand your participants pretty well. The suggested itineraries below are just that, suggestions. Feel free to pick and choose what you think will interest your participants.

Here are suggested “itineraries” for other lessons you may wish to include, depending on how many classroom hours you have. Also consider your audience’s needs and media consumption habits when choosing lessons. For example, if they are mostly not social media users, skip lessons on photos in favor of lessons on text. If participants have expressed that they want help finding trustworthy reference websites, consider lessons 3A4 (Verifying evidence) and 3C3 (Good and bad sources of science information). Feel free to mix it up as you see fit.

If you have...

|  | |  2 days |  3 days |
|---|---|--|--|
| 1 hour | 1A1 Introduction | Same as above, and add: | Same as above, and add: |
| 2 hours | Same as above, and add: 3A2 Go to the source 3B1 Re-used photos and video | 1A3 Information vs. persuasion 1A6 News and opinion 1B1 New forms of media 1C1 News selection | 1A4 First Amendment 1B2 Trust in media 1C3 Who owns the media? 2B1 Checking your emotions |
| 3 hours | Same as above, and add: 1A8 Journalism standards | 2A1 Types of misinformation 3A1 Overview and your trust gauge | 2B3 Check your phone 3A3 Verifying sources and citations |
| 4 hours | Same as above, and add: 2B2 Understanding headlines 2C1 Stereotypes | 3B3 Photo selection effect 3C2 Science news checklist | 3A4 Verifying evidence 3B2 Photo alteration 3B5 Fake social media accounts |
| 7 hours | Same as above, and add: 1A2 Types of info 1A5 Journalism: Who needs it? 3D1 Consumption and sharing habits | 3D1 The future: You’re leading the way | 3D3 Producing verifiable news |

Preparation

Gather supplies and create handouts

Go through the lessons you've chosen to include and make a list of all the handouts that you want to print out.

Next, use a template to make a syllabus of the lessons you will cover. You can find the template under Preparation, Syllabus Template.

Next, gather basic supplies (these are all summarized in the "Materials" section at the start of each lesson):

- ▶ Sticky notes, assorted colors (also called "stickies" or "Post-it" notes)³
- ▶ Black Sharpie markers — or any black marker that will write legibly on sticky notes. Fat tips encourage brevity, while fine point allows for nuance — choose appropriately! (Ballpoint pens don't work — the lines they make are too fine so they cannot be read at a distance.)⁴
- ▶ Flip chart markers in various colors
- ▶ Dry-erase markers and an eraser, if you have a venue with whiteboards
- ▶ Flip chart paper
- ▶ Tape: scotch and masking
- ▶ Blu Tack, or similar, to post items on the wall
- ▶ A roll of butcher or similar paper, especially if there are no surfaces to post items on the wall
- ▶ Stickers of various shapes (¼ -inch dots; hearts, stars, animals) to vote or indicate groups
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Projector with screen or blank wall
- ▶ Printer with copying capability, stocked with paper
- ▶ Laptops, if participants don't have their own computers or the venue doesn't have them

³ https://www.amazon.com/Sticky-Inches-Assorted-Sheets-3321-SSAN/dp/B0000E3QJW/ref=sr_1_1?s=office-products&ie=UTF8&qid=1406429124

⁴ https://www.amazon.com/Sharpie-Permanent-Markers-Point-30001/dp/B000061FHD/ref=sr_1_1?s=office-products&ie=UTF8&qid=1406429025

Finding local examples

Throughout the curriculum, we have tried to provide a variety of examples drawn from both national and local media. You may wish, however, to find additional examples drawn from the local media in your own town or state. Here are some tips to help you do that:

1. Identify the type of content you're looking for. Is it something fabricated, a piece of user-generated content, or a real (if flawed) news story?
2. For real news stories, you have a few options. You can search directly on the websites of local news organizations. You can search their sites using Google, by Googling your keyword plus "site:outletaddress.com," where "outletaddress.com" is the web address of the media outlet in question. You could also just try Googling your search term plus your location, but be aware that not all results will be from reputable outlets.
3. Try searching for keywords and your location to find user-generated photos, comments and videos on Facebook or Twitter.
4. Fabricated content tends not to be produced locally, but there may be fake content related to events in your town. Try searching a fact-checker like Snopes for the name of your town.
5. Remember that if you're sharing fake content, you want to avoid revealing at first that the content is faked. You can use a fact checking organization like Snopes to locate the content, but share either a screenshot or an archived version (using archive.org/web) of the original hoax material.

Unit 1

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- ▶ Identify their own media consumption habits
- ▶ Recognize how media evokes emotional reactions from the consumers
- ▶ Recognize that they have a responsibility when sharing media content
- ▶ Acknowledge the intent or agenda behind media outlet stories and headlines
- ▶ Be able to better understand and examine their own media consumption habits
- ▶ Learn strategies to help them better recognize and understand the emotional reactions they might have to news and media



Materials

- ▶ Slideshow
- ▶ Paper and pens
- ▶ Tape
- ▶ Highlighters
- ▶ Markers



Time Needed

1 hr. 25 min.



Definitions

Media: All types of mass communication (internet, broadcast, publishing), regarded collectively¹

Media literacy: A skill set that promotes critical engagement with messages produced by the media²

Misinformation: Incorrect or misleading information³

Disinformation: Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country⁴

Mal-information: Genuine information that is shared to cause harm, often by moving information designed to stay private into the public sphere⁵

1 Media. (n.d.). In OxfordDictionaries.com. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/media>

2 Bulger, M., & Davison, P. (2018). The promises, challenges, and futures of media literacy. Retrieved from <https://datasociety.net/output/the-promises-challenges-and-futures-of-media-literacy/>

3 Misinformation. (n.d.). In Merriam Webster Online. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/misinformation>

4 Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making*. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-research/168076277c>

5 Ibid.



Process questions

How hard is it to correct wrong or false information?

What does this suggest to you about your own responsibilities when it comes to sharing information?



Talking points

It's very hard to correct misinformation. We saw that misinformation often gets more traction than the corrective information that comes after. This means it's all the more important for us to carefully judge what we read and view, and avoid sharing something if it might be misinformation. It's important to realize that **all of us** are working against our natural instincts when we try to disengage from sensational information. Sensationalism works because human beings are drawn to it. That is why false stories travel faster than true ones. False, sensational stories work because they touch upon something we value and at the same time, create fear. Fear turns off our ability to think critically. This is why it is important to coach yourself to recognize these emotions when they are triggered.



Activity 1 15 min.

Give everyone the **My information consumption** log, sheets of paper, and pens or pencils.

Have people complete the log, filling in what media they consume regularly (email, twitter, radio, tv shows, etc.), and what content they consume on each platform. For example, they might watch the Today Show in the morning, listen to a podcast on the way to work on the bus, and check Facebook at lunch on a work computer. Tell everyone to list as much as possible and whatever comes to mind. Remember to include **all** media here — it doesn't just have to be the news.

My information consumption log:

Please see Unit I, Part A, Lesson 1, Activity 1: My information consumption.

Ask people to jot down any trends they notice in their habits, or whether anything surprised them.

Then, on a blank piece of paper, have everyone list the tech devices they use regularly (phones, computers, tablets, tv).

Now have everyone place the two sheets of paper side by side, tape them together, and draw lines from devices (such as phones, computers) to the types of media they consume (such as podcasts, news articles) to create a web. This can help people illustrate that they consume news on tv, they listen to podcasts on their phone, etc.

Finally, have everyone highlight in a color devices that they use simultaneously — texting while watching TV, etc.

Tell people their lists probably look like a mess now!

Share something about your own information use that you learned when you first did this exercise that surprised you. (Be brave! Share something slightly embarrassing — this will encourage others to open up).

Have volunteers share their daily habits.



TRAINER NOTES



Process questions

How do you feel seeing this list? How do you feel about the media and tech you use?

Does this seem like a lot of information coming at you? How does that affect your ability to discern the quality of information?



Talking points 1: Media overload 5 min.

Media overload is a documented phenomenon and a lot of us feel overwhelmed by how much media we consume, how much media we are expected to keep up with, how many devices we have, etc. It can be hard to unplug. However, there are documented negative effects, especially related to social media. For example, a recent nationally representative study found that the more time young adults use social media, the more likely they are to be depressed, according to new research from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.⁸

Being aware of certain habits and learning additional media literacy skills can help you navigate media more efficiently and find ways to help you avoid feeling totally overwhelmed. We must all take responsibility for the information we consume.



Talking points 2: Name It to Tame It 5 min.

News and media can make us feel a certain way. For example, we can be surprised, angry, confused, or sad. Taking a minute to identify your emotional reaction, and to take a pause (and a bit of distance) from it can help you better understand the news and media you are seeing, better understand you own views towards a topic, and help you avoid falling for content that might not be true.

We call this principle “Name It to Tame It” (borrowing a phrase from Dr. Dan Siegel, researcher on interpersonal neurobiology).⁹ The act of finding words to describe your emotions turns on the part of your brain that gives you mental control and the ability to regulate yourself (the “executive brain”). This gives you the ability to choose how you respond to the thing that provoked the reaction. Pausing, taming your reaction, and activating the executive brain will help you determine the truth of the information, or at least help stop you from sharing something that you are not sure is true.

⁸ Social media use associated with depression among U.S. young adults. (2016). University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). Retrieved from <https://www.upmc.com/media/news/lin-primack-sm-depression>

⁹ Dan Siegel: Name It to Tame It. Video posted by Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcDLzppD4Jc>. Siegel said of the use of Name It to Tame It in this curriculum: “Name it to tame it is a phrase inspired by the research on how linguistically assigning a word to an emotion experienced or perceived in photograph seems to enable the brain to be more balanced in its functioning. Such reflective states combined with linguistic naming may indeed be a part of stopping automatic, reflexive ways of behaving. So in these ways it seems appropriate to apply to your media literacy project.”

Dotted lines for notes.



Activity 2 15 min.

In this activity, participants will examine their feelings about cars, self-driving cars, and Uber.

Hand out the Wheel of Emotions handout. *(See Unit 1, Part 1, Lesson 1, Activity 2, Wheel of Emotions.)*

Ask if people are familiar with self-driving cars. If not, explain that these are cars that drive themselves without any help from a human.

Make sure participants have a clean sheet of paper. Display example headlines, and mention that these are all real headlines. ADVANCE TO SLIDE 11.

Give participants a chance to read and absorb each headline.

ADVANCE TO SLIDE 12, the Name It To Tame It steps.

Read these aloud:

1. **Pause:** Turn your head away from the screen or paper.
2. **Ask:** What am I feeling?
3. **Say:** The name of the feeling to yourself.



Now, ask them to write down the feelings they experienced. Acknowledge that it may be hard to put a label on an emotion, and it may feel uncomfortable.

If participants are having trouble naming the feeling, suggest they look at the Wheel of Emotions handout for ideas. Give them time to digest and process.

Ask: which of the headlines make you want to share the news with others? Why?

Repeat the exercise with slides 13-16.

Ask: has anyone ever seen an example of content that someone you know shared that provoked a strong reaction in you? What was it? How did you react? What did you think? How might sharing something that provokes others be risky? [Come prepared with your own example to share, and offer it first or early on in the conversation, to warm things up.]

Optional: Discuss the exercise afterwards as a group and see how people are feeling. Did their feelings change depending on the headlines they were seeing? Did they get stronger in a certain direction (e.g., anger, confusion, annoyance)?

Alternative for this entire exercise: Use a Think-Pair-Share approach. Divide the participants into pairs (you may want to pair men with women and vice versa). For each slide, have the participants first go through the Name It To Tame It steps on their own, then share their feelings with their partners.

Types of content: Is this content meant to inform or persuade? Is it news, opinion or analysis? This is the first step to judging content.

The First Amendment — This law supports media freedom in the U.S., so understanding it helps us comprehend why we see such a broad variety of information around us.

Why we need journalism — Journalism supports our democracy and helps us live our lives. If we value it, we'll be better placed to avoid information that doesn't serve us.

Journalism standards — These help us tell good journalism from bad.

New forms of media — The changing media makes it harder to tell what's real, but this lesson will help.

Trust in media — Why do we trust the media we do? This lesson will challenge you to think differently.

News selection — Why do journalists choose the stories they do? This lesson will help you understand.

Objectivity versus balance — It's important to know the difference, so we can better judge the content we read.

Media ownership — The entities that own media outlets can (but often don't) shape what we see and read.

Types of misinformation — What to watch for when you're reading content.

Checking your emotions — How to combat fear, anger, and surprise so you can better judge information.

Headlines — Why you have to go beyond the first line to see what's really being reported.

Stereotypes and bias — How we are all susceptible to untruths about certain groups, and how to combat bias.

Checking sources, citations, and evidence — Checking out the key signals of trustworthiness in written content.

Checking photos, videos, and social media — How we can see if an image is re-used or faked, and how to be on the lookout for other types of social media fakery.

Science and health news — How should we evaluate these kinds of stories? Where can we go for solid health information?

The future — What's next for misinformation, and why you shouldn't be scared.

Consumption and sharing habits — Change your habits to prevent information overload and decrease your vulnerability to misinformation.

Producing verifiable news — Your chance to produce solid, reliable information of your own!



Conclusions

We are bombarded with information and it can be difficult to tell truth from fiction. To be more critical consumers of news and media, it can be helpful to recognize and understand your own emotional reactions to various topics covered in the news. Using Name It to Tame It — observing and setting aside your strong emotional reactions — can help you be a more critical and self-aware consumer of news and media. After that, it's critical to be careful about whether we share the information we come across. Keep in mind that you are the information gatekeepers, and false information travels faster and further than corrections. Therefore, take steps to think critically before you share information.

Unit 1 > Part A > Lesson 2: Types of Content

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- ▶ recognize different types of media content and different ways of conveying information, such as informing, propaganda, social advertising, public relations, and commercial advertising



Materials

- ▶ Printouts or slides of the examples
- ▶ Handouts
- ▶ Sticky notes
- ▶ Pens
- ▶ Markers



Time Needed

50 min.



Trainer preparation

Prepare computer and screen if using slides.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Today we're going to learn how to identify different ways of conveying information including informing, propaganda, social advertising, public relations, and commercial advertising. This is important because we have to understand the aims an information creator has before we can judge the credibility of the information.



Activity 1 15 min.

Form 2-3 groups. Give each group different examples of information such as reporting, propaganda, and advertising. Give each group sticky notes to record their thoughts and a copy of the list of content categories (in the handout files).

Groups have 5 minutes to view the examples and categorize them using the sticky notes.

After working in groups, they should present their work and share why they chose certain labels for their examples in the final 10 minutes of this activity.

 TRAINER NOTES

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 **Trainer tips**

Depending on your situation, you can run this exercise by dropping examples you like into a PowerPoint slide show, where participants can view the different examples and record their thoughts; or you can run this exercise using handouts (making printouts of the examples), where participants can record their thoughts using sticky notes and can label their posters handouts.

For examples, see IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles.

 **Talking points** 5 min.

The instructor should congratulate participants on answers they got right, and ask the participants to further consider (individually for now) “How did you reach that conclusion?” The answer is that we all have certain clues we look for, but we often don’t get very explicit about what those clues are. Learning to identify practical markers of different types of information is a good way to become more conscious information consumers who can make these distinctions more readily in the future.

 **Activity 2** 30 min.

Form 2-3 groups to perform the task. Give each group the handout “Practical markers 1: Six content types.”

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 2, Activity 2, Practical Markers 1: Six Types of Content.

The trainer will divide the students into groups and give each group a different type of communication content: “reporting,” “opinion,” “advertising,” “social advertising,” “PR,” or “propaganda.” Each group will choose one example from their category to analyze. (The examples were categorized in the previous activity.) They should decide whether their content type counts as “information” or “persuasion,” and write the content type in the relevant box.

Participants should then answer the questions, using the example(s) that pertain to their content type (in 5 minutes) and write them in the handouts. The trainer may want to give an example and go through one type together as a large group.

 **Trainer tips**

While the groups complete the handout, divide your flipchart into two vertical sections, one for Information and one for Persuasion. You will use this to record and share participants’ answers. Note that a common theme will emerge for all types of Persuasion (that their purpose is to influence, and they tend to appeal to emotions more than information does), though they may provoke slightly different answers depending on the exact content type.

The following chart provides guidance **for trainers** on the type of answers they should expect to see. Note that there will be some variation, especially given the different examples available to participants. This chart is also available in [Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 2, Activity 2, Practical markers 1: Guidance for trainers](#).

Information versus Persuasion
Practical markers 1: Six Content Types
REFERENCE FOR TRAINERS

| Content type | Reporting | Opinion | Advertising | Social advertising | PR | Propaganda |
|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| This is a form of: | Information | Persuasion | Persuasion | Persuasion | Persuasion | Persuasion |
| Does it use fact or opinion? | Should be mostly facts. The opinions are attributed to other speakers — they are not the opinion of the author. | The author expresses his or her opinion. Better opinion pieces are supported by facts. | Opinion, that you should buy the product or service. | Opinion, about how you should behave. | Opinion, about the company in question. | Opinion, usually about politics. |
| For what purpose? | To inform. | To influence (what you believe). | To influence (what you buy). | To influence (how you behave, for the good of yourself or society). | To influence (how you think about a company). | To influence or compel (your political views, your political choices, etc.). |
| What emotions, impressions, or effects does it elicit? | Curiosity, interest, learning. | Fear, anger, concern. | Desire, joy, concern. | Altruism, fear, concern. | Positive feelings towards company. | Pride, feeling of being a part of something, anger, desire to act, hatred, fear, horror. |
| How does it work (through what mechanisms)? | Description, depiction, comparison. | Argument, description, comparison, appeal to emotion. | Appeal to desires, appealing or arresting imagery or music. | Appeal to morality, sympathy, sense of responsibility, desire for self-improvement. May borrow techniques from commercial advertising. | Appeal to positive emotions, association. | Insult, insinuation, exaggeration, distraction, views of authority figures, juggling with facts, manipulating with symbols and stereotypes, constant repetition. |
| What is its attitude towards its subject? | Neutral. | Positive or negative. | Positive. | Positive (as in prevention, action to address a problem) and/or negative (about the problem). | Positive. | Positive or negative. |

**Handout**

See Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 2, Activity 2, Practical Markers 1: Six Types of Content.

Practical markers 1: Six content types

Write in your observations about the example below.

My example: _____

| | |
|--|--|
| To whom is it directed (audience)? | |
| For what purpose? | |
| What emotions, impressions, or effects does it elicit? | |
| How does it work (through what mechanisms)? | |
| What is its attitude towards its subject? | |
| What type of information does it present? | |
| What is its impact on the media consumer? | |

My content type is: _____

This is a form of:

- Information
- Persuasion

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Unit 1 > Part A > Lesson 3: Information vs. persuasion



TRAINER NOTES

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Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Understand the difference between information and persuasion
- ▶ Improve their understanding of major principles of media, namely intent, methods, and audience
- ▶ Be better able to analyze media in their own environment
- ▶ Further develop critical thinking and analytical skills for assessing media



Materials

- ▶ Handouts: Empty “Practical markers 2” chart, “Fact sheet: The flu vaccine”
- ▶ Computer and screen for showing video examples



Time Needed

50 min. - 1 hr.



Trainer preparation

Set up video and screen.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Now we’re going to take the skills you learned in the last session and put them into practice. You know how to recognize information and persuasion when you see them, but do you know how the different types of content are put together?



Activity 1 30 min.

Divide participants into two groups: one for the “reporters,” one for the “commentators.”

- ▶ The “reporters” job is to inform and not persuade. The “commentators” job is to try and persuade the others of a position of their choosing.
- ▶ Give both groups the same fact sheet on the flu vaccine (see below).
- ▶ Each group will have ten minutes to read their facts and decide how they will use the facts while fulfilling their role.

Each group selects one presenter. The group helps the presenter prepare a two minute presentation. It can be read, memorized, prompted by notes, or improvised.

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Give the group questions of presentation to consider: Will you use all the facts? Will you say anything else? What kind of language will you use?

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Recommend that presenters practice before other members of the group; the group should give feedback.

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Use questions and answers from the last lesson if presenters get stuck, e.g., “What is your attitude towards your subject? What emotions are you trying to elicit?”

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After ten minutes are up, each group will have two minutes to present.

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Then come back together as one large group and discuss.

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Process questions

What elements made one presentation informative, and the other persuasive? Is there anything you would have done differently if you were on the other team?

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Talking points

The informative piece should have stuck to facts, and not offered any opinion. The persuasive piece could have used facts from the fact sheet — the best arguments are supported by facts — but its main point should have been to offer an opinion.

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A training might include two rounds: the first reporting versus news commentary (opinion), the second reporting vs. social advertising or propaganda. Teams could be encouraged to really get creative in the second round.

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Handout

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 3, Activity 1.

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Fact sheet: The flu vaccine

- ▶ Every year, hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized because of the flu, and thousands die.
- ▶ An annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself against flu and reduce the risk of spreading it to others.
- ▶ Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May.
- ▶ The Centers for Disease Control says that everyone six months or older should get a flu shot every flu season.
- ▶ Vaccination is especially important for those who are at risk of developing complications from the flu. These include young children, pregnant women, adults age 65 or older, and people with certain chronic medical conditions.

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- ▶ Even if you don't fall into one of these vulnerable categories, getting the flu vaccine helps you to protect people around you who do fall in these categories.
- ▶ Certain people should not get flu shots, but these exceptions are rare. Such people include those with life-threatening allergies to the flu vaccine or to its ingredients, which might include gelatin or antibiotics.
- ▶ After you get vaccinated, it takes about two weeks for your body to develop the antibodies that will protect it against flu.
- ▶ It is possible you could still get the flu after being vaccinated. But getting the flu shot reduces your risk. In many years, it has reduced the risk of getting the flu by 40 to 60%. In the 2017-18 flu season, the vaccine reduced the risk of getting the flu by about a third.



TRAINER NOTES

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Activity 2 10 min



Watch two short videos: one informative, one persuasive. See IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles.



Process questions

How do you know if this is informative or persuasive? What tools or techniques did they use that you yourself used? Did they blur the lines between information and persuasion? What do you do when you see information versus persuasion? Knowing this now, does this make you think differently about the information you consume?



Talking points

Possible answers: The aim of the persuasive pieces is to convince the audience of something, while the informative pieces aim simply to inform. Persuasive pieces often try to make their subject look good (in the case of an advertiser or politician) or bad (in the case of a health danger). Informative pieces tell you “what happened.” Informative pieces try to give both sides, if there is a debate. Persuasive pieces rely heavily on emotion and imagery. Persuasive pieces can contain facts and references, but the use of facts is selective.



Activity 3 10 min.

Now that we have had some practice with the key questions used to discern information from persuasion, let's look at some trickier examples. Watch two of the following short videos.

Examples:

See IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles.



Process questions

How do you know if this is informative or persuasive? What tools or techniques did they use that you yourself used? Did they blur the lines between information and persuasion? What do you do when you see information versus persuasion? Knowing this now, how does this make you think differently about the information you consume?



Talking points

Possible answers: These pieces blur the lines a bit more than our initial examples. The key is to think about the maker's aims. For example, the Budweiser ad gives true information about Budweiser's activities, but because the aim is to make the company look good, this is advertising. (Compare this with the news piece about Budweiser, which aims to inform, as does the HUD story.) The ad about marijuana and children cites news sources, but its aim again is to persuade you. The BBC ad seems at first to be informative, then entertaining, but its aim is to get you to use the BBC's iPlayer service. The anti-smoking ad contains facts, but its aim is to keep you from smoking, so it's persuasive.



Trainer tips

We won't have participants fill in the same chart as last time, since that would be repetitive. But here's a version of the chart as a prompt — you can use this to think about relevant questions to ask.



Conclusions 5 min.

Information and persuasion are created with different intents: one is to inform, the other to persuade. There are other differences, but thinking about the content creator's goal is key to distinguishing information and persuasion. Once you have that goal in mind, it's easier to know how skeptical you should be about the content in front of you. Recognizing persuasion for what it is helps avoid being manipulated. However, we must remember that persuasion is also a valid and even necessary type of information in many cases, such as public health.

Chart for trainers' reference:

Please see Unit A, Part A, Lesson 3, Activity 3.

Practical markers 2: Six content types



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| My content type is: | | |
|---|---|--|
| This is a form of: (Use the column under the box you check) | Information <input type="checkbox"/> | Persuasion <input type="checkbox"/> |
| For what purpose? | | |
| Is it intended to inform or to appeal to emotions? | | |
| What emotions, impressions, or effects does it elicit? | | |
| How does it work (through what mechanisms)? | | |
| What is its attitude towards its subject? | | |
| What type of information does it present? | | |
| What is its potential impact on the media consumer? | | |

Unit 1 > Part A > Lesson 4: The First Amendment

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Understand the content, role and implications of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
- ▶ Understand how the First Amendment allows both information and persuasion of all types



Materials

- ▶ Handouts: Copy of First Amendment, Reporters Without Borders index (as a backup to PowerPoint), paper, pens
- ▶ Computer and screen for playing videos
- ▶ Topic and restriction cards — you can create these on simple index cards



Time Needed

1 hr. 30 min.,
or 1 hr. 10 min. if
only excerpts of the
Annenberg video are
shown.



Trainer preparation

Set up computer and screen.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Censorship is control by the state, organizations, or other groups of people over the public expression of information, thoughts, or creativity. It is usually seen in the suppression of ideas and discussion of certain topics.

The First Amendment is this country's strongest means of protecting its citizens against censorship, and benefits us in a variety of ways. Let's learn more about the First Amendment with a video.



Training tips


Discussion of the First Amendment could trigger some strong emotions or debate. Some might bring up restrictions they would like to see, such as prohibition of hate speech, restrictions on flag burning or disrespect for officials. Try to emphasize that the point of today's lesson is to learn what the current law around the First Amendment actually is, not to debate potential changes to the law; and to talk specifically about how the First Amendment allows criticism of the government.

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 **Warm-up** 5 min.

Play the Annenberg video on freedom of the press. [See IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles.](#)

 If time is limited, show 1:59-6:02 only, and skip the later installments of the video.

For the full exercise: Start at the beginning and play until 6:14 (you'll play other parts of the video later).

 **Talking points** 5 min.

The First Amendment offers extensive protection for almost anything you could think to say or write. It also protects freedom of religion and the rights of people to assemble and protest. Here it is in its entirety. [Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 1, The First Amendment.](#)


 **Handout The First Amendment**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

 **Process questions**

What *doesn't* the First Amendment let you say or publish?
(The next activity will provide answers.)

 **Activity 1** 35 min.

 Now play the video from 6:14-14:18. [See IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles.](#)

Read each of the following examples. Have participants number the rows on their paper 1-12, and ask participants to write down on their paper: "protected" (for those items that are definitely protected speech under the First Amendment), "not protected" (for those items that are definitely not protected speech under the First Amendment), and "some restrictions" (if there are some restrictions on the speech under the First Amendment).

After they write all their answers down, go through the items one by one. This time ask participants to volunteer their answers, and discuss: Why do you think this speech is or is not protected under the First Amendment?

Remember, the idea is not to debate if these speech acts **should** be protected, although that is a worthy debate. In this lesson we just want people to understand what the First Amendment covers in its current interpretation.



Handout

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 1, Public Free Speech: Protected or Not.

Answers:

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 1, ANSWERS: Public Free Speech: Protected or Not.

Examples (and answers):

1. An editorial calling a politician “incompetent” (protected)
2. A restaurant review saying the food is awful (protected)
3. An article calling a celebrity “ugly” and “overrated” (protected)
4. Your teenage child insulting her public school teacher with vulgar words (not protected; schools can adopt policies against vulgarities and disruption of the school environment)
5. A high school protest against government policies (protected)¹⁰
6. An article accusing a politician of embezzling funds (some restrictions; there’s no prior restriction on printing this; however, the politician could sue the paper and if the accusations are found to be false and to have been published with reckless disregard for the truth, he could win.)
7. Reporting a leak from within the White House (some restrictions; usually protected, but reporter and paper could run into legal trouble if they reveal secret information related to national security)
8. Hate speech calling a racial group stupid and lazy (protected)
9. A Neo-Nazi march through an ethnic minority neighborhood (protected)
10. The leader of an extreme group says, “We’re going to take the streets in violent revolution.”(protected; only incitement to imminent violence is prohibited, and that is narrowly defined)
11. The leader of an extreme group calls on his followers to go on a killing spree tonight (not protected; Supreme Court has made a narrow exception to First Amendment protection for speech that incites to imminent lawless action)¹¹
12. A rally walking down Main Street with protest songs, drums, and a brass band (some restrictions; it could be required to obtain a permit, and be subject to “time, place, and manner” restrictions, such as being told not to rally at 2 a.m.)¹²

10 Chmara, Teresa. (2015). Do minors have First Amendment rights in schools? Knowledge Quest, 44(1), 8-13. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/Do%20Minors%20Have%20First%20Amendment%20Rights%20in%20Schools.pdf>

11 Speech from campus. (n.d.). ACLU. Retrieved from <https://www.aclu.org/other/speech-campus>

12 Many thanks to First Amendment scholar Wendy Seltzer of the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society for her review of this exercise.

Chart from Reporters Without Borders:

Where are journalists protected?





Handout

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 2, Journalist Protection Map.



Process questions

How do these situations affect people’s ability to get reliable information about their government?

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 **Talking points**

When the press is intimidated, or their access blocked, they often cannot tell citizens what their government is doing. This allows governments to act with impunity, and allows corrupt or incompetent politicians to stay in power. Now let's look at some real-life censorship impacts [choose a few from the following].

Further examples at:

[IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles](#)

 **Special Process questions**

Do you think the environment is changing for press freedom in the U.S.?

 **Training tips**

Don't try to force a single "right" answer to the questions above. Participants' answers could be colored by their political affiliation. Instead, just listen to what they have to say on the above questions, and try to get broad participation, not letting one person dominate. Also, don't let the conversation get side-tracked by debate on particular policies or politicians. Try to keep focused on the question of press freedom.

"Fake news" laws (feature only after some of the earlier examples)

See:

[IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles](#)

 **Special Process questions**

If the allegations are true, is this a good way to deal with fake news? Why might the government call something "fake news"?

 **Talking points**

Answers will vary, but some might suggest that this allows the government to decide what's "fake" — and what it decides will be in its own interest, not necessarily in line with the truth.

 **Activity 3** 15 min.

How would censorship affect your ability to live your life and speak your mind? In this activity we're going to find out. Split the group into pairs.

Provide each pair with two sets of cards: one is a topic, one is a type of restriction.

Individuals take turns within the pairs. A participant should take one of each card type. The participant then has to say at least three sentences about the topic, while observing the restriction listed on the restriction card. For example, the participant might have to talk about a movie she hated while still talking about the actors, director, etc., with reverence.

The pair should then discuss how difficult it was (or not) to address the given topic while the restrictions muzzled their speech. Then they switch, and the other participant takes one of each type of card and repeats the exercise.

Topics:

- ▶ A movie you hated
- ▶ A politician who makes you angry
- ▶ A concern you have about a political or social issue



Handout

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 3, Topics.

Restrictions:

- ▶ Don't insult
- ▶ Speak of the person or subject with reverence
- ▶ Don't say anything that might turn out to be untrue
- ▶ Don't say anything the government didn't tell you directly



Handout

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 3, Restrictions.

Then bring the group back together.



Process questions

How hard was that? When should or shouldn't these restrictions apply?



Talking points

Censorship makes it difficult to talk about many of the topics we care about. The aim of censorship is usually to protect people in power, such as the government. If we want to see changes to government policies or leadership, we need to be

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able to talk frankly to each other, and the press needs to publish freely. You might think we should restrict untrue speech, but this puts the government in the position of getting to decide “what’s true” — and they might not be honest about it!



TRAINER NOTES



Conclusions 5 min.

The First Amendment is crucial because it protects the ability of people — everyone, including reporters and opinion writers but also you and me — to say what they like about the issues that concern them. It’s especially important that we are able to say what we like and don’t like about the government. This enables us to protest, pressure the government for change and make decisions at the ballot box. Some speech is objectionable or even offensive, but protections under the First Amendment need to be wide so that we can speak our criticisms, and say things that other people don’t want to hear. The First Amendment is the bedrock of how the news media operates in the United States. We’ll be learning more about the importance of the news media in the next lesson.

Dotted lines for notes

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Understand why journalists do much of what they do, and what their ultimate aims are
- ▶ Better understand the role of journalism in their own media environment, and its importance for a functioning democracy
- ▶ Understand the methods of journalism and how it can foster social good, including empowering citizens to make the best possible decisions



Materials

- ▶ Journalist “baseball” type cards
- ▶ Issues signs (write up each issue on separate flip charts ahead of time)
- ▶ Tape
- ▶ Place signs with different issues (listed below) around the room, flipped over with the blank sides up.



Time Needed

45 min.



Trainer preparation

Set up video and screen.

Procedure



Introduction 10 min.

Ask participants: What issues do you care about? Does journalism cover these?

Some potential answers (to both questions): health, politics, education, children, sports, arts, entertainment, transportation, city planning/development, equality, discrimination, policing, crime, safety, jobs, economy, taxes, insurance, retirement, environment, water quality, air quality, parks.

For pretty much anything you care about, there are journalists who write about that subject. Some subjects are more entertaining. For example, you might use journalism to keep up with your favorite sports team, or read about a movie you plan to see.

But a lot of journalism has a serious impact on our lives. The individuals who go into this profession usually do so because they want to make a positive difference, improving their town, the nation, or the world. (The money in journalism is not

very good!) They expose wrongdoing, highlight the plight of those less fortunate, and even give us information we can use to make decisions about our lives, like where are the best schools, or how we can keep in shape. They do this in the face of enormous pressure to keep churning out stories in a limited amount of time, and are sometimes faced with pressure from politicians or advertisers who don't want to see these stories published.

In this day and age, we get our information from all kinds of sources, not just journalists, and there is a lot of public criticism of journalists and the media. But journalists have played — and still play — a very important role in improving the lives of people. In looking at the range of information creators, we wouldn't want to leave out the journalists. In this lesson, we'll look at some journalists who have made a powerful difference in the U.S. and around the world.

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Activity 1 30 min.

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 5, Baseball cards

After the initial discussion, flip the issue signs over. You'll have a sign for each one of these issues:

- ▶ Environment
- ▶ Health and safety
- ▶ Human rights
- ▶ Children
- ▶ Government and corporate corruption



Handout

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 5, Activity 1, Issues

Hand out to each participant a Journalist “Baseball Card.”

The Journalist Baseball cards include: name of a journalist, a picture, a snippet from the newspaper article that exposed the issue, and evidence of how journalism changed things (changed law, lives saved, etc.).

Ask them to match the card to the issue that each journalist worked on and stand next to the sign with the issue that relates to their journalist.

Answers: Issues, with the journalists that best fit under each:

- ▶ Environment (Carson)
- ▶ Health and safety (Sinclair, Adams, Werner)
- ▶ Human rights (Morel, Skinner, Wells, Shah, Liu)
- ▶ Children (Chicago Tribune; Boston Globe [could also go under human rights])
- ▶ Government and corporate corruption (Tarbell)



Handout

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 5, Activity 1, Answers for Issues

Debrief: Did the issue resonate with you? Why?

Next, pick 3-4 participants to role play. These participants will assume the identity of the journalist on their card, presenting themselves to the group as their chosen journalist: for example “Hi, I’m Rachel Carson, and I wrote about the dangers of the pesticide DDT...”

Ask each of the presenters to share with the group, in the role of their chosen journalist:

What issues are you concerned about today? (Pretend all the journalists are still alive.)

What makes your job difficult today?



Trainer tips

Possible answers to the question, “What issues are you concerned about today?”:

- ▶ Environmental journalists: Climate change, air pollution, water pollution, loss of habitat, endangered species
- ▶ Health journalists: Poor insurance coverage, conflicts of interest in industry-funded research, need for more research (e.g., on possible carcinogens)
- ▶ Human rights journalists: Religious freedom, poor working conditions in many industries, restrictions on women’s rights
- ▶ Children’s rights/safety journalists: Child labor, trafficking, migrants
- ▶ Government/corporate corruption journalists: Voting inference, enrichment at public expense, monopolies and industry consolidations



Process questions

Can you name three journalists working today whom you trust? Why do you value them?

If you can’t name three journalists whom you trust: Why do you think this is?



Talking points

A lot of times we don’t notice the names of journalists — we’re more focused on the name of the publication, or the content of the story. We might be better able to recall names of TV correspondents as compared to newspaper reporters, because we hear TV correspondents’ names out loud, and we see their faces for a few seconds. We probably remember anchors

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better than correspondents, because we see more of them. But some of the people we see the most of aren't delivering news at all — they're giving opinion, or hosting others who give their opinion. That's OK, as long as we can identify when we're hearing news and when we're hearing opinion.



Conclusions 5 min.

Today we looked at some of the extraordinary contributions journalists have made towards improving our society. It's because of journalists that we've uncovered child abuse in the Catholic Church, exposed modern-day slavery, banned certain dangerous chemicals, instituted food safety standards, and more. With all the problems in our country and around the world affecting our health, education, the safety of our children, the health of the planet and our basic human rights, it's crucial that journalists be allowed to keep investigating and reporting on our behalf. They arm us with the information to make decisions in our daily lives and at the ballot box.



TRAINER NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines provided for taking notes.

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Understand major principles of media, including the division between reporting and opinion, and the markers for detecting each in their own media environment
- ▶ Understand how and why the media transmits news and opinion as it does, and the role that both news and opinion play in a well functioning democracy



Materials

- ▶ Copies of opinion and informative pieces to share
- ▶ Handouts “Telling fact from opinion,” “Answers: Telling fact from opinion,” handouts of an example news piece and an example opinion piece, “News and opinion markers”
- ▶ Highlighters — yellow, orange, and green — one set per participant



Time Needed

1 hours 10 min.



Trainer preparation

Set up video and screen.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Ask participants: what is journalism?

The American Press Institute says “Journalism is the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information. It is also the product of these activities.”

This doesn’t mean that some journalists don’t also give opinions. Think of editorials in the newspaper. It just means that opinion should be kept separate from news, and should be clearly labeled.

Today we’ll talk about how to tell news from opinion. First, we’ll talk about the difference between opinion and statements of fact. Then we’ll talk about how journalists use these two very different types of statements, and what makes a piece news or opinion. Then we’ll talk about the role that each type of piece plays, and why they’re both important, but need to be clearly labeled and understood.



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Process questions 5 min.

Before we talk in particular about types of journalism, let's just talk about the two types of statements. What is an opinion, and what is a statement of fact?



Talking points 5 min.

Try to bring participants around to these fundamental distinctions:

An opinion is a belief or point of view. It might be based on facts, but you cannot demonstrate that an opinion itself is true or false. For example, it is my *opinion* that California is the best state for a vacation.

A statement of fact is something you can show to be true or false. You can check whether it's true, and demonstrate its truth or falsehood to someone with evidence. Factual statements about California include the number of beaches and the average temperature. I can support my opinion about California with these factual statements.

Note that statements of fact can be false. "The population of the United States is one billion" is a false statement of fact, because it makes a claim, which we can check and discover is false. It's presented as being a fact and is not an opinion.

When presenting a fact, it's always best for journalists to tell readers the source of that fact. However, we'll see that this isn't always done in practice.



Activity 1 15 min.

Give participants the **Handout**Telling Fact from Opinion.

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 6, Activity 1, Telling Fact from Opinion

Ask participants to read the articles, and highlight them as follows:

- ▶ Opinions — yellow
- ▶ Fact presented without a source — orange
- ▶ Fact presented with a source — green

Then give them the handout, Answers: Telling Fact from Opinion, and review the answers together.

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 6, Activity 1, ANSWERS: Telling Fact from Opinion



Process questions 5 min.

How did you determine what was fact? How did you determine what was opinion? What was difficult about this exercise? What does it tell you that sometimes fact and opinion are both in an article?



Talking points 5 min.

Facts can be shown to be true or untrue using evidence. Evidence can support an opinion, but you can never prove that an opinion is true or false.

News articles should be made up entirely of facts. Their main point is to inform you. One caveat is that news articles might report the opinions of people other than the author. For example, a reporter might write, “‘This is a terrible policy,’ John Smith said.” John Smith is expressing an opinion, but it’s a fact that he made that statement. So a news article reporting Smith’s statement is still just reporting the facts.

Opinion pieces include opinion statements made directly by the author, but often contain facts as well. These facts aren’t there just to inform you, however — they’re there to support the opinion. The main point of an opinion piece is to persuade you.



Activity 2 15 min.

Now let’s see if we can tell the difference between a news piece and an opinion piece.

Present participants with two pieces: one opinion piece, and one news piece from the same publication. Do not tell them explicitly which is which (even though it will soon be obvious from some of the labels). Ask them, as they read, to think about the following: Is this news, or opinion?



Handout

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 6, Activity 2:

- ▶ Hartford Courant — Republican Questions
- ▶ Hartford Courant — Too Many Judges
- ▶ Roll Call — Big Test for Business
- ▶ Roll Call — Tax Bill
- ▶ WP — Conversations about broken system
- ▶ WP — Opioids



Process questions 5 min.

How could you tell what was news versus opinion? Is labeling “opinion” a good thing? Why or why not? How could you tell besides the labels? What kind of language is used?

Once participants have given their answers, give them the handout “News and Opinion Markers” and continue the discussion until all appear clear on the distinction.

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Strengthen their understanding of the markers for detecting reporting and opinion
- ▶ Be able to reflect critically on the media’s some-time failure to properly label news and analysis
- ▶ Understand the importance of identifying these distinctions



Materials

- ▶ “News and Opinion Markers” hand-out from previous lesson



Time Needed

50 min.

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Trainer preparation

Set up video and screen.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Journalists’ biggest role is reporting on the news — that is, giving the facts. But there are also journalists who write or present opinion pieces, which are designed to persuade. In the middle you have “analysis,” which is designed to explain and give context for the more basic facts provided by reporting. All kinds of journalism are important: they give us information about what’s happening, place that information in the context of larger issues, and help us understand the arguments for and against different points of view.

However, it’s sometimes difficult to tell the difference. Unfortunately, media outlets are not always as clear as they should be about this distinction. In this segment we’ll learn how to start teasing these ideas apart, and why that’s important for being a smart news consumer.

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Activity 1 15 min.

Show the first segment, and ask whether this is news or opinion. How can you tell?



Video:

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 7, Activity 1, 1A7 CNN 1¹³

Watch 0:22-1:20



Show the next segment, and ask whether this is news or opinion. How can you tell?

Watch 5:37-8:02



Process questions 5 min.

Who is speaking in each segment? What is their role? What kind of language do they use? Are they just telling us “what happened,” or something more?



Trainer tips

For answers/explanation, refer back to the handout from the previous lesson “ News and Opinion Markers.”

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 7, Activity 1, Copy of news and opinion markers.



Activity 2 10 min.



Video:

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 7, Activity 2, 1A7 CNN 2¹⁴

Watch 21:13-23:23



TRAINER NOTES

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13 CNN Newsroom with Poppy Harlow. (2015). CNN Newsroom. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/CNNW_20150404_190000_CNN_Newsroom_With_Poppy_Harlow/start/0/end/60

14 CNN Newsroom with Brooke Baldwin. (2018). CNN Newsroom. Retrieved from https://archive.org/details/CNNW_20180101_180000_CNN_Newsroom_With_Brooke_Baldwin/start/1278/end/1338?q=cnn+analyst



Process questions 5 min.

Was this news or opinion, or something else? What were the titles given to the three panelists by CNN? What are their jobs when they're not on CNN?

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Talking points 5 min.

Journalism includes news, opinion, and analysis. All are essential for our democracy and none are inherently bad. The problem comes when opinion and analysis are not properly labeled as such, and here they are not. The title “CNN analyst” is confusing — you might think the person works for CNN. In fact, these are outside commentators that CNN brings in to analyze a story. Sometimes they are journalists (such as the Daily Beast reporter) and sometimes they are former political staffers or even former military or intelligence officers. In any case, when these “analysts” appear, they are analyzing the news rather than reporting it.

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Activity 3 5 min.

Direct participants to take the quiz at this website (under Before You Do This Task, You Might..., no. 3): <https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/13/skills-practice-distinguishing-between-fact-and-opinion>.

You can also find the link at:

[IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles](#).

On the whole the examples are straightforward, but students may have trouble with example 1. This is mostly factual, but they would be correct to point out that “remarkable personal odyssey” is opinion.

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Conclusions 5 min.

Some outlets don't do a very good job of distinguishing news from opinion, and the savvy news consumer needs to understand which he or she is reading in order to evaluate the content. However, opinion and analysis are not inherently “bad.” They can help us test our own point of view and think about the different ways of looking at an issue. The important thing is that we learn to distinguish between opinion and news.

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Handout

Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 8, Activity 1, SPJ Journalism Standards.



Process questions 10 min.

What do you think about the list? Would following these principles make for good news reporting? Is there anything you would add to the list?



Activity 2 20 min.

Divide participants into small groups and give groups different examples of news reporting. Give them the following handouts.

News stories:

[Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 8, Activity 2, Article A](#)

and

[Please see Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 8, Activity 2, Article B](#)

Tell groups that they will use the SPJ Standards to help them evaluate their examples and determine whether or not the example meets the standards for quality journalism.

Give groups worksheets where they can record their results.

Have groups take notes and then share their thoughts.



Worksheets

Hand out the two blank worksheets (per person) from

[Unit 1, Part A, Lesson 8, Activity 2, Journalism Standards Worksheet](#)



Process questions 10 min.

Overall: Which standards tended to be followed? Which were not followed?

How did Piece A and Piece B differ in what standards they followed?

What can you infer about the relative quality of Piece A and Piece B?

Unit 1 > Part B: The Changing Media > Lesson 1: New forms of media & changes in traditional media

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives

- Participants will:
- ▶ Learn to think critically about the changes that have taken place in the information ecosystem in the past 20 years or so
 - ▶ Think critically about how this complex new ecosystem affects the judgments they must make as audience members
 - ▶ Learn that while the question of “who is a journalist” has become harder to answer, real journalism follows journalistic principles
 - ▶ Learn about the damaging economic conditions for journalism in the past 20 years, and how these conditions affect what news is available for participants to read

Materials

- ▶ Sticky notes
- ▶ Markers

Time Needed

1 hr.

Set-up:

Post the Dates in History printout on the wall as one long line of six pages. Make sure you keep the pages in the correct order.

Please see Unit 1, Part B, Lesson 1, Set Up, Dates in History¹⁵

Write the following on sticky notes. Mix the order of the notes up and place them on a table or wall where they'll be easily accessible for participants:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Writing on clay tablets | Radio | YouTube |
| Papyrus | Amateur (Ham) Radio | Twitter |
| Hand-written books | TV | Smartphones |
| Printing press | Cable | Whatsapp |
| Postal service | Internet | Electronic tablets |
| Newspapers | Email | Instagram |
| Telegraph | Google | Snapchat |
| Telephone | Facebook | Virtual Reality Journalism |
| Film | | |

¹⁵ Sources: Wikipedia; List of Rulers of China. (2004). Metmuseum.org. Retrieved from https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chem/hd_chem.htm

Procedure

 TRAINER NOTES



Introduction 5 min.

Today we'll look at how the media has changed over time. This has important implications for our ability to discern truth from falsehood, because so much has changed — not just how much news we get and how it's delivered, but even the distinction between journalist and audience.

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Teaching tips

During the lesson, there should be time for general feedback, such as “What do you think of all these forms of news/media?,” because this can help determine emphasis of discussion in subsequent sessions.

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Warm-up 5 min.

Give participants sticky notes with the various technologies written on them (writing on clay tablets, papyrus, etc.).

Their job is to place the innovations along the timeline. This will show the great pace of acceleration of communications technology. They can add other information-related innovations that may occur to them.

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Answers:¹⁶

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|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Writing on clay tablets | 3000 BC | Radio | 1900s | YouTube | 2005 |
| Papyrus | 2400 BC | Amateur (Ham) | | Twitter | 2006 |
| Hand-written books | 1st century AD | Radio | Early 20th century | Smartphones | 2007 |
| Printing press | 1430s | TV | 1920s | Whatsapp | 2009 |
| Postal service | 6th century BC | Cable | 1940s | Electronic tablets | 2010 |
| Newspapers | 1600s | Internet | 1960s | Instagram | 2010 |
| Telegraph | 1830s | Email | 1970s | Snapchat | 2011 |
| Telephone | 1870s | Google | 1998 | Virtual Reality | circa 2015 |
| Film | 1880s | Facebook | 2004 | Journalism | |

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Process questions 5 min.

Did anything about the history of these communications technologies surprise you? Where are the technologies clustered? What do you think the effect of this rapid innovation has been?

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¹⁶ Sources: Wikipedia; The invention of cable TV. (n.d.). Travel Channel. Retrieved from <https://www.travelchannel.com/videos/the-invention-of-cable-tv-0243886>



Talking points 1 5 min.

Technology innovation has accelerated greatly in the past few decades, and communication technology has been central to that revolution. Today we get our journalism from a wide variety of sources, not just print (and print has far fewer readers than before).

Previously, we talked about the standards that good journalism follows. But do we get all our information today from “journalism”? Who follows journalism standards? Who even is a journalist? Let’s talk about that now.

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Activity 1 20 min.

Display a variety of information that may or may not be considered journalism.

Please see Unit 1 Example Articles.

The screenshots can be found in the *slideshow Unit 1, Part B, Lesson 1.*

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Process questions (after looking at all examples)

Which among these is journalism? What makes it journalism? Is it the medium, content, training, language, tone, attribution, or something else?

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Talking points 2

Today, anyone can publish. In some ways, we can all be journalists. You can record something happening near you and publish it for your friends and neighbors. It might even go viral, nationwide or worldwide. But the quality of information published online varies tremendously. Most of us don’t have the time to verify information and report on context the way that journalists do and most people who share information online have not committed to follow the journalistic standards we discussed above.

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Activity 2 15 min.

This activity is a discussion that helps participants draw links between the collapse in traditional media revenue to declining news coverage (especially local news)

Share this chart showing the decline in newsroom employees.¹⁷

Please see slideshow: Unit 1, Part B, Lesson 1.

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¹⁷ Source: Newspapers fact sheet. (2018). Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/>



Talking points 3

The news industry has suffered declining revenues for decades now, with big drops starting as the internet began to take off. The 2008 recession dragged revenues down further. With print subscriptions falling sharply, fewer people are seeing print ads, meaning newspapers have lost a lot of money. Online ads just don't bring in enough money to make up the shortfall, especially because news organizations compete with social media and other platforms for advertising. News outlets are left doing whatever they can to try to maximize their online content, getting as many people as possible to click through to their stories. That's why "clickbait" — manipulative headlines that trade on your curiosity to get your clicks — became so widely used. The drop in revenue means newspapers have had to shed a lot of jobs, and many have had to close. It becomes harder and harder for journalists to do their job and report on everything that ought to be covered.

Now have a look at the maps in the slideshow:

Please see slideshow: Unit 1, Part B, Lesson 1.

If a computer is available, click on the link on Slide 11 and let participants explore the map on the website.

Then have participants click to the website from Slide 12 and explore the data for where they live.



Process questions

What do you notice? How do you think the number of newspapers in a hometown affects what journalism is produced and is available to readers?



Talking points 4

Dozens of local daily papers closed, merged or were reduced to weeklies in just a dozen years. Some might be near you. Local newspapers faced the same economic pressures we outlined above, but they have been disproportionately affected by these pressures. The impact is fewer journalists to cover what's happening in your city hall or state legislature, or to investigate the local issues that matter to you like crime, schools, transportation, and the environment. Because of the lack of employment opportunities in smaller towns and the nation's interior, most U.S. journalists end up in big cities on the coasts.



Conclusions 5 min.

Our ways of communicating have changed dramatically over the past couple of decades, and the news has changed along with it. Journalists are under tremendous pressure to report and write quickly and to get "clicks" for their articles. This is one of the reasons that headlines, even from credible sources, can provoke strong emotions. At the same time, it gets harder to tell who is and who isn't a journalist. Anyone has the capacity to publish online, but not everyone follows journalistic principles, which take time to learn and put into practice.

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Unit 1 > Part B > Lesson 2: Trust in media

 TRAINER NOTES

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Learn to reflect on their own feelings of trust or distrust towards the media in general, and towards particular media outlets
- ▶ Learn about why people tend to trust or distrust media, and the way this both affects and is affected by misinformation in our media environment
- ▶ Be able to better understand current views and opinions that Americans have about the media, and how that creates an environment ripe for misinformation



Materials

- ▶ Paper and markers
- ▶ Computer and screen for showing video and PowerPoint
- ▶ Handouts:
 - ▶ Fox headlines under NY Times banner (don't give this away when you show them the handout!)
 - ▶ NYT headlines under Fox banner (don't give this away when you show them the handout!)
 - ▶ NY Times: real headlines
 - ▶ Fox: real headlines



Time Needed

1 hr. 5 min.

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Trainer preparation

Use markers and paper to write four signs: strongly agree, somewhat agree, strongly disagree, somewhat disagree. Post these in the four corners of the room.

Set up the computer and screen for showing the video at the end of the lesson.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts."

Do you agree? Why is it important that we all agree on the facts?



Talking points

Having a commonly shared perception of reality is important for social cohesion and peaceful societies. We need to understand what the problems in society are, and what is or isn't being done to address them, before we can debate what actions we need to take. Sometimes it's hard to tell what the truth is, but journalists need to try to find out what it is, and communicate it. Unfortunately, our view of what the truth is can be shaped by all sorts of biases.



Activity 1 15 min.

Four corners exercise. Designate each corner of the room with a category: strongly agree, somewhat agree, strongly disagree, somewhat disagree. Read out 4 or 5 of the following statements about attitude towards the media, and have people stand in the corner of the room that matches their opinion of each statement: strongly agree, somewhat agree, strongly disagree, and somewhat disagree. People who have no opinion can stay in the middle, but try to push people to pick something.

Please see the slideshow Unit 1, Part B, Lesson 2.

Make the final statement of the exercise "The media I rely on..." (marked with *** below).

After people choose their corners for each statement, have everyone discuss why they chose what they did, and how they view the media. Then reveal the survey results (see further below).

Recommended statements to choose from:

- ▶ I trust the media to report fully, accurately and fairly
- ▶ There is a lot of political bias in the news
- ▶ News media is important for our democracy
- ▶ The media is important to make sure people are informed
- ▶ The media keeps political leaders from doing their job
- ▶ If a news story casts a politician in a negative light, then it's fake news
- ▶ The mainstream media makes up stories more than once in a while
- ▶ The government should be able to stop a news outlet from publishing a story that government officials think is biased or inaccurate
- ▶ ***The media I rely on most is better than what most people use.*** (Make this the final statement of the exercise).

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Show slides of the survey results:

Please see the slideshow Unit 1, Part B, Lesson 2.

- ▶ I trust the media to report fully, accurately and fairly: 41% agree¹⁸
- ▶ There is a lot of political bias in the news: 45% agree¹⁹
- ▶ News media is important for our democracy: 84% agree²⁰
- ▶ The media is important to make sure people are informed: 95% agree²¹
- ▶ The media keeps political leaders from doing their job: 31% agree²²
- ▶ If a news story casts a politician in a negative light, then it's fake news: 28% say this is always the case²³
- ▶ The mainstream media makes up stories more than once in a while: 44% agree, specifically re: stories about President Donald Trump²⁴
- ▶ The government should be able to stop a news outlet from publishing a story government officials think is biased or inaccurate: 25% agree²⁵
- ▶ The media I rely on most is better than what most people use: 48% say the media they use most often is fair, compared to 30% for media in general²⁶

 **Process questions**

Does anything surprise you about these figures? Does having a lot of people agree on something necessarily make it true? Why do you think your fellow participants have the perspectives they do?

 **Activity 2** 20 min.

Pose these questions to participants. Get their ideas for five minutes and write on the board or paper.

18 <https://news.gallup.com/poll/219824/democrats-confidence-mass-media-rises-sharply-2016.aspx>
19 <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-trust-media-and-democracy>
20 <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-trust-media-and-democracy>
21 <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-trust-media-and-democracy>
22 <https://poyntercdn.blob.core.windows.net/files/PoynterMediaTrustSurvey2017.pdf>
23 <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-trust-media-and-democracy>
24 <https://poyntercdn.blob.core.windows.net/files/PoynterMediaTrustSurvey2017.pdf>
25 <https://poyntercdn.blob.core.windows.net/files/PoynterMediaTrustSurvey2017.pdf>
26 <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/my-media-more-trusted-than-the-media/>



Activity 3 15 min.



Introduction

There are a few reasons why people don't trust or like the media. A lot of it has to do with human psychology.

One such reason is called "motivated reasoning." This means that, as we saw with the above activity, we tend to agree or believe a source if we think it's on our side. This means that we are not inclined to trust a lot of the media out there that we don't think is on our side. And it's not just your political enemies who do it. We all do it!

Wrap up with a video or audio clip explaining how motivated reasoning and/or confirmation bias works:

See slideshow, Unit 1, Part B, Lesson 2.



Process questions

Why do people do this? Is it conscious?

What are the consequences if you disagree with your peer group?

What are the consequences for you personally if you're wrong on a policy issue?

If your judgment about a news source is colored by your ideology, how do you know who to trust?



Talking points

A lot of the time, motivated reasoning is unconscious. Our brain unconsciously directs us to find or believe the information that will allow us to stay in agreement with our peer group, which could be political, religious, or even sports-related. (It's been shown that your judgment of which side played dirtier in a game depends a lot on which side you're on!)²⁷ We figure out what news to trust by looking for adherence to standards, and through verification or debunking tools.



Conclusions 5 min

Today we looked at the unconscious factors that shape our trust in media outlets. Trust isn't always rational, but we have to try to think rationally about our news consumption and evaluation. The first step is to acknowledge these unconscious forces, and then to try to counteract them by thinking about standards and verification. We will revisit the issue of journalistic standards in the next session, and later on we'll talk about hands-on tools to help you determine what to trust.

²⁷ Hastorf, A. H., & Cantril, H. (1954). They saw a game; a case study. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 49(1), 129-134. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1037/h0057880>

Unit 1 > Part C: Agenda setting/gatekeeping > Lesson 1: News selection



TRAINER NOTES

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Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Learn the basic process editors use to decide what stories to cover, and the pressures that inform that decision-making, including questions of time, business performance and audience preference
- ▶ Learn and reflect on how this process, along with platform algorithms and their own consumption choices, affects what news they see
- ▶ Learn about the “firewalls” between ownership/advertising and editorial



Materials

- ▶ Pens and paper, poster paper or whiteboard
- ▶ “What Gets Covered” worksheet
- ▶ “List of Potential Stories” handout



Time Needed

1 hour



Trainer preparation

Use markers and paper to write four signs: strongly agree, somewhat agree, strongly disagree, somewhat disagree. Post these in the four corners of the room.

Set up the computer and screen for showing the video at the end of the lesson.

Procedure



Introduction

Today we’re going to talk about the factors that influence what stories get covered and what stories you see, which are not necessarily the same thing. We’ll talk about decisions reporters and editors make in the newsroom, as well as the influence of social media and the importance of the choices *you* make.



Activity 1 10 min.

Please see *Unit 1, Part C, Lesson 1* for the “What Gets Covered” worksheet.

Give participants the “What Gets Covered” worksheet. Have participants jot down news they have heard recently in the first column of the worksheet. Ignore the second column for now. Tell everyone to list as many examples as possible.

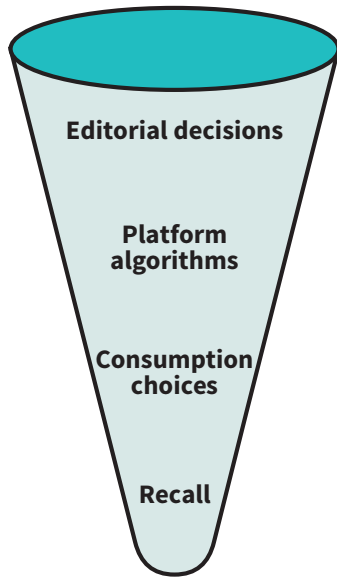
Ask participants what trends they are noticing. Are these stories mostly about one topic? Are they about “good” news or “bad” news?



Talking points 5 min.

There are a lot of complex factors that contribute to the type of news we see and what we recall seeing. You might want to draw this funnel diagram on the board or poster paper.

The story funnel: How stories get to us



1. **Editorial decisions:** There’s a number of factors that go into editors’ decision-making about what stories to cover. These include what readers want; what outlets think they have a responsibility to cover; what they’ve covered in the past; and what other outlets are covering.
2. **Where we consume our news:** online and social media tools use algorithms in different ways to show us things we might like, which can reinforce certain trends and create filter bubbles — the common situation where we’re only shown content that matches our point of view. (When we consume broadcast or print news in their original formats, algorithms don’t guide our choices, of course).
3. **What we consume:** there are many choices on many platforms. Many factors influence our choices.
4. **What sticks in our brain:** why do you remember what you do? How might that influence your news consumption habits?

Today we’re going to concentrate on how editorial decisions get made.

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- 4. **Rarity:** Unusual events get more coverage than ordinary events. The old saying goes that “Man bites dog” will get more coverage than “Dog bites man.”
- 5. **Impact/severity:** An earthquake that kills 10,000 will get greater coverage than one that kills 100.
- 6. **Celebrity/power:** If a well-known politician or a famous actor does something, that’s more likely to be covered than if your neighbor does the same thing.
- 7. **Competition:** Oftentimes, if one outlet covers a story that promises to engage readers, others will follow suit. Sometimes outlets try to distinguish themselves with an original “angle” or approach to the story, but sometimes they just want to be seen covering what everyone is talking about, and to get their share of the clicks.
- 8. **Exclusivity:** On the other hand, if an outlet knows it has a story no one else has, it has a big incentive to run that story.
- 9. **Timeliness:** Events that happened recently are prioritized over things that happened days or weeks ago. The 24 hour news cycle moves quickly and this can influence what journalists cover and how long they spend on a certain story.²⁸

Have participants return to their “What Gets Covered” worksheet and fill in the second column, considering the factors we discussed above.



Activity 3 15 min.

Please see Unit 1, Part C, Lesson 1, Activity 3 for the “List of Potential Stories” handout.

Divide participants into groups of 3 or 4, and give each group the “List of Potential Stories” handout. Tell them they are editors at a large national newspaper. Ask each group to try to come to a consensus on five stories to cover on their homepage. Participants should discuss and debate, by presenting rationale based on the nine factors above.

After 10 minutes, each group should share out which stories they prioritized, and the large group can discuss different factors leading to the choices.



Talking points 5 min.

There are no right and wrong answers to this exercise. Different editors would probably come to different conclusions. The important thing is to recognize that there are always more potential stories than outlets have the resources to cover or than audiences have the time to consume. So editors have to make hard choices.



Conclusions 5 min.

There are lots of complex and intersecting factors that contribute to the decisions that journalists and news outlets make regarding what types of news to cover and how to cover it. These factors also contribute to what we see and how we see it. Understanding how the factors intersect and influence news coverage can help us be more aware of what we are seeing and why.

²⁸ Some of these items are based on McQuail, D. (2010). McQuail’s Mass Communication Theory, 6th ed. Sage Publications, pp. 308-318.

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives

- Participants will:
- ▶ Understand the concepts of objectivity, bias and balance, and the similarities and differences among these
 - ▶ Learn how these concepts guide story selection processes in newsrooms

Materials

- ▶ Poster paper
- ▶ Markers

Time Needed

1 hour 10 min.

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Procedure

Introduction 5 min.

Today we're going to talk about the concepts of objectivity, bias, and balance. Sometimes these are used interchangeably, but they don't all mean the same thing.

Activity 1 15 min.

Ask participants: How would they define objectivity? What does an objective news piece look like? Is objectivity something participants want from the news media? Why or why not?

Write responses on the poster paper. Divide it into three sections: "Definition," "Features of objective news," and "Do we want objectivity?"

Talking points

People can mean many different things when they talk about objectivity.

Originally, in journalism, "objectivity" meant journalists should develop a consistent method of evaluating information to try and keep their biases from creeping into their work.²⁹

²⁹ The lost meaning of 'objectivity'. (n.d.) American Press Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/bias-objectivity/lost-meaning-objectivity/>

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This is a good way to think about biases. Sometimes people say journalists should have no biases, but as we saw in the Trust in Media lesson, all humans have biases. The question is how we manage those biases.



TRAINER NOTES

Objectivity is important so that journalists don't let their biases interfere with their reporting. It helps editors choose the best stories to cover, and helps journalists decide who to interview, what to ask, and how to write their stories.

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Activity 1 10 min

Please see [Unit 1, IREXL2D Unit 1 Example Articles](#) for the following articles.

Have participants read the first article and discuss as a group.

If time allows, repeat the process with this second article.



Process questions

Is this report balanced? Why or why not?



Talking points

The reports are balanced because they feature the voices and arguments of people on both sides of an issue. The daylight savings article first quotes a state senator against Proposition 7, then the lawmakers who proposed the measure, and repeats this structure. The Illinois tollway article first raises the possibility of conflict of interest, then allows the accused to defend themselves. It then quotes critics of the deals, and goes back and forth several more times between critics and defenders.

Note that there are many news stories where the idea of having “balance” or “points of view” doesn't make much sense and where the important thing is just to communicate information. Examples include reports on crimes, road closures, human interest stories, entertainment stories, and many more.



Activity 2 15 min.

Ask participants: Does objectivity mean “balance,” i.e., covering all sides of an issue? Why or why not?

Write responses on the poster paper. Divide into two columns “Yes” and “No.”



Talking points

There are lots of issues where people disagree and we want to show the variety of opinions, and give equal weight to each. But there are other times that doing so would demonstrate “false balance,” and actually distort the truth of an issue.

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For example, if you were writing about flat earthers, you wouldn't want to say "Some believe the earth is flat; others say it's round." You would want to point out the overwhelming scientific evidence that supports the idea of a round earth.



Optional: Show the video found under [Unit 1, IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles](#). Be warned: 1) It contains foul language; 2) Those already disbelieving of climate change (i.e., some conservatives) will probably not be swayed by this, and there's a danger that participants could want to debate climate change instead of the subject at hand.



Activity 3 15 min.

Please see Unit 1, Part C, Lesson 2, Activity 3 for the two stories mentioned in this activity.

Have participants read two stories. Discuss: Which stories' approach did they prefer? Why? What was the role of balance in each?



Talking points 5 min.

The first piece was more "balanced" between widely different points of view on gravity, but it's what we call a "false balance." On certain matters, we don't want to present all opinions as equal.

Balance is still an important concept, and seeking balance can help reporters manage and address a variety of biases. These can include biases towards:

Official voices: To a certain extent, government officials' voices should form a big part of reporting, because they influence legislation and regulation. But political opponents and the general public must also get their say.

Sources: Journalists must listen to what and consider sources feel is important, but remember their ultimate obligation is to the public.

The unusual: Always choosing the "man bites dog" story can paint a distorted picture of current events.

Subject: Some subjects get routinely covered or ignored by the reporter's own publication, or the media in general. Editors have to think about what's really important and choose coverage accordingly.³⁰



Conclusions 5 min.

Objectivity and balance can be loaded terms and can often be misunderstood. Objectivity helps reporters and editors manage their bias so they can choose a good selection of stories and write stories fairly. Writing an accurate and objective news piece doesn't always mean creating a perfect balance of all opinions on a subject. Journalists are humans, and like all of us, have to acknowledge and manage their biases in order to report well.

³⁰ Understanding bias. (n.d.) American Press Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/bias-objectivity/understanding-bias/>

Unit 1 > Part C > Lesson 3: Who owns the media?

 TRAINER NOTES

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Learn to reflect on ownership of today's media, from the corporations that own many of the papers, websites and stations, down to the independent bloggers
- ▶ Reflect on how ownership might (or might not) affect content
- ▶ Learn about the role that tech giants play in helping to determine what we access
- ▶ Understand the role of algorithms in social media



Materials

- ▶ Poster paper
- ▶ Markers
- ▶ Posters (create on flip chart paper in advance):
 - ▶ Highest rated news: Broadcast
 - ▶ Highest rated news: Cable
 - ▶ Large U.S. papers
 - ▶ Local TV stations
 - ▶ Local radio
 - ▶ Local papers
- ▶ Stickies
- ▶ Computers or participants' smartphones (A computer with projector or large screen is preferable if you plan to watch the optional videos)



Time Needed

1 hour

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Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

In the last session, we talked about how information comes at you from a huge variety of platforms, technologies and brands. Some providers, like bloggers, can be very small. But who really does control what information gets to you and how? Why does it matter?



Activity 1 25 min.

Please see Unit 1, Part C, Lesson 3, Activity 1 for the posters mentioned below.

Please see Unit 1, L2D IREX Unit 1 Examples Articles; and Unit 1, Part C, Lesson 3, Activity 1 for the FCC websites.

Ask participants: Who owns the media? Who are the people or companies who own:

- ▶ National TV networks (broadcast)
- ▶ National TV networks (cable)
- ▶ National newspapers
- ▶ Local TV stations
- ▶ Local radio stations
- ▶ Local newspapers
- ▶ Internet providers
- ▶ Cell phone companies
- ▶ Facebook
- ▶ Instagram
- ▶ Snapchat
- ▶ Google
- ▶ YouTube

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Write their responses on a big sheet of paper or whiteboard.



Trainer tips

There’s a small potential for stereotyped or bigoted responses to the opening question. If people name a particular ethnic group as in control of the media, gently suggest that’s not a specific person or organization, and also mention it’s an idea we’ll come back to. (Then make sure you DO come back to it in the Stereotypes section.)

Then hang up the following posters (without the ownership info):

- ▶ Highest rated news: Broadcast
- ▶ Highest rated news: Cable
- ▶ Large U.S. papers
- ▶ Local TV stations
- ▶ Local radio
- ▶ Local papers
- ▶ Local internet providers and cell phone companies
- ▶ Social media companies

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TRAINER NOTES

Dotted lines for taking notes.

Divide participants into pairs or threes. Give participants a stack of stickies.

Ask each group to select one or two stations and newspapers that interest them. (Don't have any groups research the same papers and stations.)

Ask each group to do online research to try and determine who owns the papers and stations in question, as much as they can in 15 minutes.

For local radio, they should start with a search on the FCC website.

(For TV, the FCC search is less helpful.)

When they have answers, participants should write them on the stickies and place them on the posters.

Then hang up the answers (posters with ownership info) and discuss.



Process questions

What did you find? Who are the large national companies? Which properties are owned locally or regionally?

Did anything surprise you? Why does it matter who owns these companies?



Talking points

On the national level, some companies own several outlets. The companies include News Corp., Tribune Publishing (Tronc) and Comcast. Then there are national companies that own many local TV stations and newspapers. These include Scripps, Tegna, Univision, and Gannett. You may find that multiple local radio stations are owned by the same companies or organizations. Universities (or their board of regents) often run public radio stations. Social media is more consolidated than you may realize: Facebook owns Instagram and Whatsapp, and Google owns YouTube.

Why does it matter? Less variety of ownership generally means less variety of content and viewpoints. Local outlets generally tailor their content for their audience, but there's evidence that they do also get direction from the top. We'll talk more about the role of ownership on these content choices in the next lesson.



Activity 2 10 min.

Please see the PowerPoint under Unit 1, Part C, Lesson 3, Activity 2 for the image below.

Ask participants: Why did we ask about social media in the last activity? How does social media influence what news you read?



Talking points

Share with participants: Increasingly, people get their news online: 43% of U.S. adults now get news online frequently. So how much of *that* is through social media?³¹

On a piece of flip chart paper, draw a big circle divided into eight pie pieces. Make a legend: One color is Google, one color is Facebook.

Ask a volunteer to guess how much of news website traffic she thinks comes from these two sources.

Then reveal the answer by coloring in the circle: Facebook is a full quarter (two slices), Google is 44% (almost half the pie).³²



Process questions

Does this surprise you? Is this how you get your news? Why does it matter that this is how people get to the news? Most importantly, how does using social media influence what news you see?



Activity 3 15 min.

Please see Unit 1, L2D IREX Unit 1 Example Articles, Unit 1, Part C, Lesson 3, Activity 3 for the link to the website and optional videos below.

Split participants into groups of five people or fewer. Each group should have a computer or smartphone.

Have the groups navigate to the website and explore for five minutes.



Process questions

Why do you think people's feeds look so different? How does social media accomplish this polarization?




Talking points

If you're like most people, your connections on social media are too numerous for you to read everything everyone posts. Social media uses algorithms — pieces of computer code — to analyze what you like and what you're likely to read or engage with in the future. Then, they show you what they think will interest you most. Some of the signals that feed into algorithms include how old a story is, who the sharer is, and how you've interacted with them in the past. Search sites like

31 Gottfried, J. & Shearer, E. (2017) Americans' online news use is closing in on TV news use. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/07/americans-online-news-use-vs-tv-news-use/>

32 Molla, R. (2017). Google is sending more traffic than Facebook to publishers — again. Recode.net. Retrieved from <https://www.recode.net/2017/12/11/16748026/google-facebook-publisher-traffic-2017-increase>

Lesson Overview

 **Learning Objectives**

Participants will:

- ▶ Become familiar with the concept of firewalls, which in many cases keep a publication’s business interests from interfering with its editorial decisions
- ▶ Recognize how firewalls can fail, and how ownership can affect the choice of stories and how stories are covered
- ▶ Reflect critically on whether this potential for influence from above is reason not to trust mainstream media, when compared to the outlets that don’t follow professional standards

 **Materials**

- ▶ Handouts
- ▶ Computer and projector or screen for showing optional materials

 **Time Needed**

1 hour 15 min.

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Procedure

 **Introduction** 5 min.

This lesson will look at how the ownership of news outlets affects what gets covered. We’ll also look at the effects of advertising on coverage choices. Both relationships are more complicated than you may think.

 **Warm-up** 5 min.

Ask participants: Does the ownership of a news outlet affect what they cover or how they cover it? What about who buys ads in a newspaper or on a station — does that affect news coverage? Can you think of examples where it does, and where it does not?

 **Talking points**

If students can’t think of examples, that’s OK. We’ll look at examples of each in the following exercises.

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What about the role of ownership? How does that affect what gets covered and how? We'll look at that in the following activities.



Activity 2 10 min.

Please see Unit 1, Part C, Lesson 4, Activity 2 for the articles for the following activity.

Show participants two articles about the same news event. Ask them to guess the outlet that covered each. (Beforehand, the masthead should be blacked out, along with any disclaimers about ownership).



Process questions

Did the ownership affect their coverage? What purpose does the disclosure serve?



Talking points

In this case, the fact that Murdoch owns the Wall Street Journal doesn't particularly seem to have affected the paper's coverage of this important business story, and the WSJ acting transparently by disclosing its connection to readers.



Activity 3 10 min.

Please see Unit 1, IREX L2D Unit 1 Example Articles, Unit 1, Part C, Lesson 4, Ownership and agenda setting, Activity 3 for the video for the following activity.

Optional:



Show participants the Deadspin video of Sinclair stations repeating directive from on high (can cut off after 1:00 or show entire video).



Process questions

Why are they all reading the same script? Is this problematic? Why or why not?



Talking points

Local news need the independence to cover what's important to their community. This editorial, on the other hand, was written by someone in the Sinclair corporation, and stations all over the country had to read the exact same script. The origin of this segment is also unclear to viewers. It may appear to be the genuinely held opinions of the local anchors, rather than a prepared script they have been ordered to read out.

Unit 2

Unit 2: Misinformation and Manipulation > Part A: What is misinformation? >

Lesson 1: Types of misinformation

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Become familiar with different types of manipulative content and misinformation
- ▶ Understand why they play a key role in stopping misinformation, and the importance of “Caring Before You Share”
- ▶ Learn strategies to help them identify these types of content



Materials

- ▶ Pens and paper
- ▶ Posters or slides
- ▶ Copies of Bingo sheets 1-3 (enough so each participant gets one of the three bingo sheets)
- ▶ Small prizes to give away for Bingo winners



Time Needed

1 hr. 10 min.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

In this lesson we’re going to talk about the different kinds of misinformation that you can find in the media. There’s a lot of ways that people try to distort the truth or even spread wholesale falsehoods. Learning what kinds of manipulation are out there can help you to detect misinformation and keep from spreading it.

This content can come in a variety of forms: There’s disinformation, which is intended to deceive, and misinformation, that’s not — it is most often the result of editorial mistakes or poor journalistic work.



Process questions 5 min.

Ask participants: Do they have an important role to play in stopping dis- and mis-information? Why or why not?



Talking points

It’s important that we think about how we share information. We share a lot of it. Bots play a role, but look at the human footprint on this visualization ([see link on page 2 of the slideshow for Unit 2 Part A Lesson 1](#)). Notice how many people were

required for this rumor to get started. Automated Twitter accounts known as bots played a role, but the rumor would not have gained this much traction without individuals passing it on.

Dis- and mis-information spread if individual people pass it on. This is important because misinformation can have real-world (even dangerous) ramifications, as we'll see in the following activity.



TRAINER NOTES

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Activity 1 15 min.

Break the participants into four groups. Have each group read or skim one of the four stories and discuss their reactions. Then have one participant from each group summarize their story for the entire group.

The four stories can be found in *Unit 2, Part A, Lesson 1, Activity 1, Example stories.*

Show the slides, *Unit 2, Part A, Lesson 1. Show slide 4: Care Before You Share.* Ask participants to volunteer and explain why they think each step is necessary. If participants get stuck, return to the two main points of this activity:

1. Dis- and Mis-information is spread by everyday people like you and me.
2. Dis- and Mis-information hurts people and ruins lives.



Activity 2 10 min.

You can find the slides under *Unit 2, Part A, Lesson 1.* You can find the links to the articles explaining the debunked examples in *Unit 2, Unit 2 Examples under Unit 2, Part A, Lesson 1, Activity 1.*

Display different examples of misinformation.



Process questions 5 min.

Discuss the above examples. Why do you think people create dis- and mis-information and distort the truth? What do they have to gain?



Talking points

Sometimes people create disinformation to support their political candidate or cause. Sometimes people believe what they're writing is true. In a huge proportion of cases, it boils down to money. The creators of disinformation make money from "pay per click" advertising every time you click links from Facebook that go to the hoaxsters' sites. Similarly, the authors of misleading headlines are trying to lure you so they can make money from a click. It's important to know there's a cost to your click — you are providing the incentive for the hoaxster to keep perpetrating the hoaxes. So if the article seems shady from the outset, better not to even click on it! You play a key role in stopping dis- and mis-information.



Activity 3 30 min.

You can find the bingo sheets under *Unit 2, Part A, Lesson 1, Activity 2* titled “Bingo.”

You can find the examples under *Unit 2, Part A, Lesson 1, Activity 2, Activity 2 Examples*, and the answer key to the examples under *Unit 2, Part A, Lesson 1, Activity 2, Answer Key to Activity 2*.

Review and discuss the seven types of information disorder from First Draft News (*please see Unit 2 on your thumb drive, Unit 2 Examples in Unit 2, Part A, Lesson 1, Types of Misinformation, Activity 2, Example 1 for the link to the article*). Explain that we’ll use these categories in our next activity.

Hand each participant one of the Bingo sheets. Try to distribute Bingo Card 1, Bingo Card 2 and Bingo Card 3 evenly.

Then go through the following examples one by one (this document also gives answers, it’s for your eyes only).

Ask participants to discuss and collaboratively determine what category each example falls under. If they can’t agree or reach the wrong conclusion, try to prompt them towards the right answer. Once the right answer is determined or revealed, participants should cross that square off. The first person or people to get three in a row get to shout Bingo! and get a prize.

As a reminder, the categories are:

- ▶ **Misleading content:** Misleading use of information to frame an issue or individual
- ▶ **Imposter content:** When genuine sources are impersonated
- ▶ **Fabricated content:** New content that is 100% false, designed to deceive and do harm
- ▶ **False connection:** When headlines, visuals, or captions don’t support the rest of the content
- ▶ **False context:** When genuine content is shared with false contextual information
- ▶ **Manipulated content:** When genuine information or imagery is manipulated to deceive
- ▶ **Satire or parody:** No intention to harm but has potential to fool



Conclusions 5 min.

Non-credible news and information can take many forms, including misinformation and disinformation. These types of non-credible information often differ in terms of intent, or whether or not the creator is trying to deceive, manipulate, or otherwise cause harm with their content. Being able to recognize information that might be false or manipulative in some way is a vital media literacy skill and can help you avoid falling prey to a scheme or someone’s bad actions and bad intent. Remember to Care Before You Share — you are the most important line of defense against misinformation!

Unit 2 > Part B. Checking Your Emotions > Lesson 1: Checking your emotions

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Better understand their reactions to manipulative content designed to elicit a strong emotional response
- ▶ Learn strategies for managing their emotions when looking at news and other content



Materials

- ▶ Pens and paper
- ▶ Posters or slides
- ▶ Emotion Pictures



Time Needed

35 min.



Trainer preparation

Trainers should ensure the example content is appropriate for their audience, as some images might be disturbing, and adjust accordingly.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Review some of the types of emotionally manipulative media from the previous chapter.

Explain that images are often used to manipulate people or spread false content because images are powerful and can often be more memorable than print text or audio.

We often glance at images very quickly on social media, so it is important to slow down a bit and be sure what we are seeing is credible.

Modern technology also makes it difficult to distinguish credible and non-credible images since it is increasingly easy to manipulate or doctor a photo, video, or audio.

expresses their emotion. For example, “scared” could involve repeatedly curling up into a ball. Or the movement could be inspired by the Emotion Picture. But don’t let us dictate. Encourage them to get creative! When the emotion comes up a second time, everyone has to do the movement or gesture that the participant made up.



Conclusions 5 min.

Images and video can be powerful and can often be used to manipulate people emotionally or to spread non-credible information. Being aware of trends in media and image manipulation and being cautious when seeing images and videos can help you be a savvy consumer of media and less likely to fall victim to a scam or some otherwise false or manipulative news or information.



Trainer tips

Depending on your situation you can run this activity using electronic slides or a print poster.

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Highlight some trends from the examples. Trends include:

1. **Clickbait.** Language that encourages you to read or share something online, often by leaving questions unanswered
2. **False connection, part 1:** News articles, in print and online, might feature a headline that doesn't completely represent the actual article content
3. **False connection, part. 2:** TV headlines might be misleading or only highlight part of a more complex issue
4. **Fabricated content:** Both the headline and the article content are manufactured and false.

Discuss: why do you think these kinds of headlines attract our attention? What might we do so as to not get caught by these kinds of hooks?



Talking points 5 min.

Suggestions:

Name It to Tame It.

1. **Pause:** Turn your head away from the screen or paper.
2. **Ask:** What am I feeling?
3. **Say:** The name of the feeling to yourself.



Care Before You Share:

1. Name It to Tame It!
2. Take **responsibility**. Know that YOU are the information gatekeeper. Don't spread misinformation!
3. **Acknowledge** what you may not know.
4. If you have time, **check** it out! Do what you can to verify information.
5. If you're still not sure it's true, **don't share it**.



Conclusions 5 min.

In a world where most of us get news, at least in part, from social media, headlines are increasingly important. But headlines across media platforms can often be misleading, manipulative, or simply inaccurate. Being aware of different types of headlines, more wary when reading headlines, and taking time to name any emotion you have in reaction to a headline, or simply pause for a moment, can help you become a savvier consumer of news more generally.

Unit 2 > Part B > Lesson 3: Check Your Phone

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Consider whether they are likely seeing manipulative information and misinformation on a regular basis
- ▶ Learn to apply prior lessons to help them better recognize manipulative content and misinformation in everyday media consumption



Materials

- ▶ Pens and paper



Time Needed

25 min.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

In this lesson, we're going to apply some of what we've already learned to see what misinformation or manipulative information is popping up where you typically consume content. You might be surprised by what you find!



Activity 1 15 min.

Have everyone get out their phones and/or computers.

Tell them to spend some time going to social media sites they typically visit, or news or media sites they visit online.

Have everyone write down some of the headlines they see.

Are they noting things like clickbait, manipulative ads, etc. that we discussed in the previous lessons?

Ask a few volunteers to share out any trends they noticed or things they are newly aware of thanks to the prior lessons on forms of manipulative media and misinformation.



Conclusions 5 min.

Being more aware of the different types of media we encounter in our daily lives can make us savvier and more critical consumers of media. We need to keep the types of misinformation in mind as we read on a day-to-day basis, so we can more easily detect when we're being manipulated.

Unit 2 > Part C. Stereotypes > Lesson 1: Stereotypes



TRAINER NOTES

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Learn what a stereotype is
- ▶ Learn how stereotypes hurt people and how they distort the truth



Materials

- ▶ Computer and projector for showing videos



Time Needed

40 min.



Trainer preparation

Suggested: do the Classroom Culture Training. *Please see Unit 2, Unit 2 Examples; and Unit 2, Part C, Lesson 1, Stereotypes, Trainer Preparation* for the link to the training.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

We all have stereotypes about different groups of people. Some can be quite innocuous. The problem with stereotypes comes when they dehumanize people: where instead of seeing a person, we see just one example of a type. This blinds us to what the person is really like. Frequent stereotyping can lead to discrimination or even violence.

We all have hidden biases — it's actually part of how the human brain works. We form stereotypes because in many cases, it's useful. We see an apple and know it's probably not poisonous, because past experience tells us that apples are not usually poisonous. Or, as psychologist Paul Bloom says, you would never ask a toddler for directions.¹ The important thing is to recognize harmful stereotypes, and then work to counteract them.


¹ Why Do We Create Stereotypes? (2014). NPR.org. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=362373052>

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Option B:

Tell participants that as they watch the following video, they should ask themselves: What is this video about?


 Show video, "Strangers."

Pause the video at 1 min. 30 sec.

- ASK: What is the story?
- Who are the characters?
- What are the relationships between them?
- How will the story develop further?

 Continue the video, and then pause again at 4 min. 4 sec.

- ASK: Are there any new characters?
- How has it affected the story?
- Has the relationship between the first two characters changed?
- If so, how?
- How do you think the story will develop further?

 Watch to the end of the film.

ASK: What did you think of the film overall? What points was it trying to make?

 **Talking points**

Arabs and Jews are the conflicting sides in this example. These groups often oppose each other; therefore, it is conceivable that one would assume that any two members of these groups will be antagonistic. However, the film characters behaved differently.

Most often, we create stereotypes about those who are least like us:

- ▶ We often use social stereotypes as a means to identify a person.
- ▶ We rely on fixed signs of identity instead of the behavior of the individual.



Activity 2 15 min.

Break participants into groups of 2-3. Ask each group to brainstorm on sticky notes: What are some signs of stereotyping? How can you tell if something is stereotyping? You can give them a couple of examples from the Talking Points if they seem uncertain how to answer the question.

After five minutes, have all participants put their sticky notes onto the wall. Have them try to group the sticky notes thematically. (If several sticky notes say the same thing or close to the same thing, *don't* discard. This repetition may show it's a particularly strong idea.)



Talking points

Possible answers include:

- ▶ Generalities (“All Indians are...;” “All women are...” etc.). Some generalities frequently used: dumb, smart, lazy, hard-working, cheap, greedy, criminal, drug- or alcohol-abusing, hypersexualized, timid.
- ▶ Belittling (Calling a grown person “little” or “boy”).
- ▶ Mocking, making the butt of jokes.
- ▶ Exaggeration, caricature (Big noses in cartoons of Jews).
- ▶ Exoticizing (Saying an Asian woman looks “exotic,” depicting Native Americans as always engaged in spiritual rituals).
- ▶ Exclusionary language (Assuming that people are not part of your group, e.g. when whites assume non-whites are not Americans).

People create stereotypes partly on their own, in addition to the influence of society and media. Stereotypes “save thinking” by allowing one to describe a person with two or three words. But stereotypical thinking cannot cover all different situations in life. Stereotypes often lead to prejudice, and reinforce unequal power relations.



Conclusions 5 min.

Stereotypes permeate our daily lives so much so that we are often blind to them. But if you know what to look for, you can start to detect the influence of stereotypes on your own thinking, as well as others. It's important to remember that stereotyping other people has negative effects. Next, we'll look at how stereotypes and biases play out in the media.

Unit 2 > Part C > Lesson 2: Stereotypes and biased reporting in the media



TRAINER NOTES

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Be able to identify and critically assess examples of stereotypes in media



Materials

- ▶ Identity worksheets printed out
- ▶ Pens
- ▶ Several pairs of scissors
- ▶ Several rolls of tape
- ▶ Red pens



Time Needed

1 hr.

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Trainer preparation

Optional: review classroom culture training, if not already completed.

Please see Unit 2, Unit 2 Examples, Unit 2, Part C, Lesson 1, Stereotypes, Trainer Preparation for the link to the training.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

In this lesson we'll talk about how stereotypes and biases play out in the media. Often the influence of stereotypes is very subtle, and can only be detected by looking at patterns over time. First, we'll look at how we describe and identify ourselves.



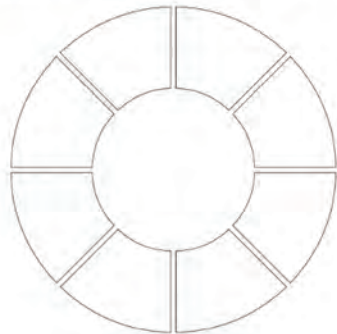
Warm-up 15 min.

Please see Unit 2, Lesson 2, Warm Up for the image and worksheet for this exercise.

Identity circles exercise:

Give each participant a blank worksheet and ask them to write "Human" in the center. In the outside, they should write in groups with which they identify. These can be anything from gender and sexual orientation to race, ethnicity, indigenous group, religion, displacement/immigration status, nationality, age, disability, to terms like "athlete," "teacher," "student,"

“musician,” “activist” — any group with which they identify. They should avoid personally descriptive adjectives like “hard-working.” Ask them to respond as thoroughly as possible, though it’s OK if they don’t fill in every slice of the wheel.



Write “human” in the center circle.



Process questions

Which identities do you want to play up and which do you want to play down, and why? Which make you feel more vulnerable or excluded? Which brings you advantage and power?



Talking points 5 min.

We all have multiple identities that we use to describe ourselves. A lot of times we might jump to conclusions about how to categorize someone, ignoring the many ways they themselves would describe their identity. It’s also important to keep in mind that certain identities give us power in our society, while others can exclude us.

We hold a lot of stereotypes without realizing it. We internalize stereotypes when they get repeated over and over, even in subtle ways. In some ways, this is our brain doing what it should be doing. When our ancestors stereotyped bears as dangerous creatures, they were right! But applying the same logic to humans often isn’t based on reality.

Together we’ll look at examples of how the media uses words and images that spread stereotypes and negative attitudes towards different groups, and amplify divisive issues within and between groups of people. Each of us can be considered “the other” by members of a different group. So:

- ▶ Media often uses stereotypes to communicate with its audience.
- ▶ Prejudice is a negative attitude formed on the basis of stereotypes.
- ▶ Prejudice forms the basis for discrimination against a group or individual.
- ▶ Hate speech is when one group of people begins to say that another group is flawed or otherwise imperfect.

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Activity 1 30 min.

Please see Unit 2, Part C, Lesson 2, Activity 1 for the two articles referenced below.

Please see Unit 2, Unit 2 Examples, Unit 2, Part C, Lesson 2, Stereotypes and biases in the media, Activity 1 for the link to the video below.

Give participants one of the following articles. Ask them to think about what the words, images, and juxtaposition might be subtly communicating about race. What would they change about the article, if they could? Give them scissors, tape and red pens, and allow them to make whatever changes they think are necessary.

For article 1, specifically, direct participants to the article, “Two Lives at Crossroads in Ferguson.”

For article 2, specifically, direct participants to the article “White Nationalist Protest Leads to Deadly Violence.”



Process questions

Why did you change what you did? What was the original piece saying or implying, perhaps subtly?



Then play the video.



Process questions

Did you agree with the changes Alexandra Bell chose to make to the articles? Why or why not?



Talking points

News headlines, stories, photos and even layouts can subtly reinforce and play upon our biases, or otherwise make statements about bias in our society. For example, the white nationalist story didn’t get anything wrong, but Bell argues that the size of the story didn’t get across how novel and severe the event was. Again, none of the facts in the Ferguson story were wrong, but it’s worth asking ourselves how a story about an 18-year-old white boy would have been covered. It’s likely we don’t all agree on how these stories should and shouldn’t have been presented, but the important thing to keep in mind is that reporters and editors make millions of tiny choices that, over time, help us build up our pictures of other people.

Dotted lines for writing notes.



Activity 2 15 min.



Trainer tips

If time, another activity that can be brought in is the implicit bias test. *Please see Unit 2, Unit 2 Examples, Unit 2, Part C, Lesson 2, Stereotypes and biases in the media, Activity 2* for the link to the test.

Note that Mahzarin Banaji, the social psychologist who created these tests from her research, has said that she was surprised to discover her own race biases when taking the test. These are biases that we all have, in one way or another. But we can become aware of them so that we can choose how we want to think about and treat other people.



Conclusions 5 min.

A lot of the time we form our perceptions of other people based on preconceived biases. Where do those biases come from? A lot of it comes from the people around us, but some also come and are perpetuated or reinforced by the media. Examining the media we consume is a good chance to challenge biases and stereotypes we might hold.

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Unit 3

Unit 3: Fighting Misinformation > Part A: Evaluating written content: Checking sources, citations, and evidence > Lesson 1: Overview: your trust gauge

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Be better able to determine the credibility of different types of media they may encounter
- ▶ Learn strategies they can employ to determine the credibility of written media



Materials

- ▶ Brainstorming, whiteboard or poster paper
- ▶ Projector for trust gauge pictures



Time Needed

10 min.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

How do you figure out whether you can trust a piece of written media? Trust shouldn't be like a light switch, either off or on. Think of it more like a gauge or a speedometer, going from 0 to 100. There's a lot of signals that can clue us into how credible a piece of information is, and as we take in those signals, we move the arrow on our gauge up and down. Are we 80% confident the information is correct? 50% confident? 30%? We never have the complete picture on any topic, so it is unlikely we can ever truly be 0% or 100% confident.

Today we're going to talk about key pieces of information that should help you determine your confidence level.

Your trust gauge: Not like this....



Like this!⁴²



1 Picture sources: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Double_Light_Switch.jpg
<https://www.maxpixel.net/Design-Dashboard-Gauge-Display-Dial-Measure-1853619>

Unit 3 > Part A > Lesson 2: Go to the source

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Be able to explain the importance of “going to the source,” or clicking on and reading the original reporting on a topic
- ▶ Demonstrate the inclination to go to the source as one of their first ports of call when judging written material



Materials

- ▶ Computer and projector to show articles, or copies of the articles to distribute



Time Needed

30 min.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Today we’re going to talk about the importance of “going to the source,” and getting the reporting in its earliest form, when we’re reading content online. This should be one of your first steps when you’re weighing up how much you should trust a given piece of information. Let’s dive in so you can see what I mean.



Activity 1 20 min.

Show participants the following article.

Please see Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 2, Activity 1, Article 1.





Process questions

Is Pitchfork the best source of this information? Who would be a better source, and one that's very easy for us to check?



Talking points

When one news source cites another, it usually links to the original source. That means it's relying on that other source for this information, and hasn't independently verified the information. It's always a good idea to read the most original reporting, because going to the original report means you can see what steps that journalist took to corroborate the information.

In this case, Pitchfork cites CBS and TMZ, among others. *Please see Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 2, Activity 1, Articles referenced in Article 1.*

Let's look at another example. *Please see Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 2, Activity 1, Article 2.*

Pope Francis Says Christians Should Visit Mosques and Praise Allah

July 6, 2018 | Baxter Dmitry | News, World | 3



Share 2.5K | Share | Tweet | 1 point

Christians around the world should visit mosques and praise Allah, according to Pope Francis who led by example on his visit to Istanbul by entering the Blue Mosque, taking off his shoes, facing Mecca, and praising the Muslim god.

According to Reuters:

Dotted lines for taking notes.



Process questions

What would you do here? Why is this important?

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Talking points

Here the reporter has neglected to link to the original story, but he indicates that some of the text comes from Reuters. Let's Google a snippet of that ("Francis took off his shoes as he entered the huge mosque"), and find the original story. *Please see Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 2, Activity 1, Original Story for Article 2.*

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Process questions

What differences do you notice between the YourNewsWire story and the original?

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Talking points

The YourNewsWire story takes some liberties with the truth. While it's true that Pope Francis prayed in a Mosque, there's no support for the claim that he "prayed to Allah" and, more strikingly, he never called on Christians to do so.

Much of the YourNewsWire story is a fabrication. The first line is false and unproven. Then the story tries to give itself an air of legitimacy by quoting correct information from Reuters. Then it goes back to falsehoods.

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Conclusions 5 min.

Going to the source is an important precaution, because in some cases, the later report actually distorts the original information. In other cases, there's no manipulation, but going to the source is still a good idea so you can judge how the reporter gathered the information. Going to the source is usually very quick and easy, so it should be one of the first checks you do to judge information you come across online.

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Verifying Sources and Citations Worksheet

| Questions | Notes |
|---|-------|
| Name of the article | |
| Does the article refer to people who served as sources? Is this needed on this article? | |
| Are the sources and citations multiple, or is only one source or document used throughout? | |
| Does the article accurately describe the sources and citations it is using? | |
| Can the sources used be trusted to be independent, and not distort the truth to serve their self-interest? | |
| Are the sources named, or are anonymous sources used? If the latter, is there a good reason provided for the anonymity? | |
| Does the person quoted have good evidence for what they're saying? Would we expect them to be an authority on that topic? | |

 **Talking points** 5 min.

The article uses a number of sources and citations. The sources are an Ofo executive (via a statement), the president of the Cooper's Ferry Partnership, and a Camden city spokesman. The citations include a CNN article, a study on bike share programs, a previous NJ.com article, and a Rutgers University announcement, and most of these are linked. The article accurately describes its sources and citations and all could be expected to be authoritative on the topics they're speaking to. There are no anonymous sources. Some of the sources might be expected to have their own interests at heart, but these do not overwhelm the story. For example, the company official is no doubt trying to put a positive spin on the situation, but his is far from the only voice in the piece.

For participants' future reference: It is not necessarily a bad thing if an article lacks citations. Sometimes, all the information comes from talking to people, rather than from documents that can be linked to. However, where a story does rely on written or recorded evidence, you can have more confidence if those citations are provided.

Lesson 4: Verifying Evidence

4. Ask if the document or source organization really is well placed to provide the information.
5. If you have your doubts, try to identify a reputable source for checking the information yourself.
6. Google or search the organization’s website for the information you need.

Verifying Evidence handout found at [Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 1, Steps to Verifying Evidence](#).

Here are some reputable reference sources for various types of information:

Iseek: A specialized search engine that allows you to look across thousands of pre-approved sources, including universities, governments, and nonprofits, on a wide variety of academic topics

Science Reference Services, Library of Congress: A list of reference guides on a wide variety of scientific topics

CIA World Factbook: Facts about countries, including their people, history, government, and economy, plus maps and flags of the world

National Security Archive: A depository for over 30 years of declassified U.S. government documents

American FactFinder: U.S. Census data, including everything from age, income, housing and industries to race, country of origin, poverty and education

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Data on employment and unemployment, pay and inflation

Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics: Information on crimes, arrests, prosecutions, and prisons, including some long-term trends

FBI: Crime in the United States: More recent data on crime rates in the U.S.

Congress.gov, Senate.gov, House.gov: Good historical government data

World Bank Data: Free access to vast amounts of data on global development

For links, please see [Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 1](#)

3. False: Use the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice statistics, and you'll find the information

For links, please see Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 1, Talking points



Activity 2 10 min.

As you can see, verifying evidence for yourself can be rewarding, but it can also be time consuming. That's what makes fact checkers so invaluable: They investigate claims so you can quickly find the answers.

A lot of people associate fact checkers with politics, but they verify and debunk a lot more information than that. For example, in the list below we have fact checkers who investigate items about celebrities (Gossip Cop), science (SciCheck), and all manner of hoaxes and wild claims (Snopes). Fact checkers come from across the political spectrum, for example the former Tea Party activist who encourages conservatives to debunk fakes (Unfakery).

Have everyone look at the following websites of leading fact-checkers in small groups. They should choose a fact-check that interests them, and discuss how they would themselves seek to verify the claim. Then they should look at the methods the fact-checker used, and see where these differ.

Organizations to explore:

- ▶ FactCheck.org
- ▶ SciCheck
- ▶ Snopes
- ▶ PolitiFact
- ▶ Washington Post Fact Checker
- ▶ Gossip Cop
- ▶ Unfakery

For links, please see Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 4, Activity 2.



Conclusions 5 min

We can go a step beyond previous lessons, checking not only the content itself but cross-checking the evidence presented. This process involves several steps: thinking critically about what's in front of us, for example thinking about the numbers and math involved; seeing if the source material says what is claimed; questioning the authority of the source material; and finally doing our own search for the information on a reputable site.

This kind of verification can be rewarding, but to do it in full does take some time. Fact checkers are an invaluable resource because for whatever claim you're reading, there's a good chance fact checkers have already investigated it using many of the same techniques. You can also use some of the sources in the Easy Fact Checking Tools handout.

Unit 3 > Part A > Lesson 5: Publication dates & Examining story changes



TRAINER NOTES

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Check the original dates of news shared on social media
- ▶ Learn skills to help them determine the date of a publication by using archival tools like the Wayback Machine
- ▶ Learn how to use archival tools to see if an article has changed over time



Materials

- ▶ Pens and paper
- ▶ Projector
- ▶ Computers with Internet



Time Needed

30 min.

Procedure



Talking points

We tend to assume that what we see on social media or in the news is “new.” If the event described actually happened years ago, this places the event in a very different context and can change how we feel about it. Old stories often get recycled on social media, so your first step should be to see when the story was actually published².



Introduction 5 min.

In this lesson, we’ll practice Name It to Tame It to help us pause before reacting to a piece of news. We will check original publication dates, and learn how to use online archives to find old versions of a story. This allows us to see if changes have been made over time.



Activity 1 10 min.

Have participants look at the following examples, and discuss one at a time. For each example, ask them to Name It to Tame It.

² For more information on how old stories go viral and find new life on social media, see: https://archives.cjr.org/news_literacy/old_stories_going_viral.php

Dotted lines for taking notes.

The Name It to Tame It steps:

1. **Pause:** Turn your head away from the screen or paper.
2. **Ask:** What am I feeling?
3. **Say:** The name of the feeling to yourself.



Then reveal the date of publication on each, and ask: How does it change your feelings when you find out that this is an old story, recycled? How does it change the meaning of the news item?

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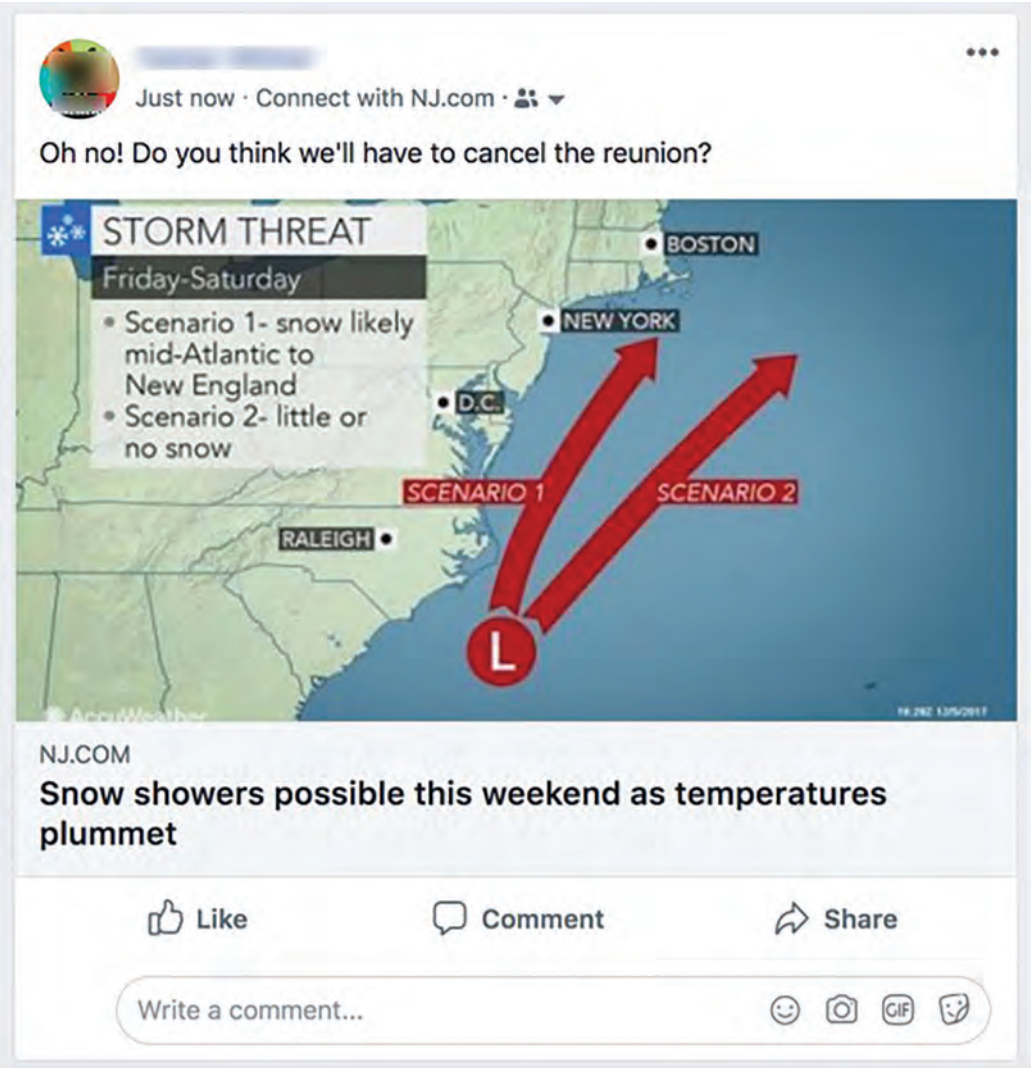
Answer for no. 1:

This made the rounds on social media despite the fact that the actress died in 2010. *Please see Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 5, Activity 1, Article 1.*

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Answer for no. 2:

If your friend shares this local news story on social media, it will appear at first glance to be new. You need to click on the story to determine the actual date, December 6, 2017.

Please see Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 5, Activity 1, Article 2.



Activity 2 10 min.

Explain that we will be using online archival tools to help us explore media. Explain that resources like the Internet Archive work to preserve and archive the web and to ensure that people can go back and find content that might have been changed or even deleted and see when something was published. (We have been using it to archive stories highlighted in this course.)

Explain that people can use the Wayback Machine to find old content and to save websites or articles themselves. Sites like archive.is also let people find old content and save current content.

For links, please see Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 5, Activity 2.

Provide a quick demo of searching on the Wayback Machine and on archive.is with a URL. You can use this following article, which features a later correction by the New York Times. *Please see Example sheet: Unit 3, Part A, Lesson 5, Activity 2.* This article is interesting to explore since it features two corrections as well as different publication dates for print and online editions.

Let everyone explore the Wayback Machine and archive.is on their own and check out different links to articles or topics of interest.



Conclusions 5 min.

Check the publication date as a first step. If the story actually doesn't report on new events, how does that change our interpretation of it? Using archival tools like archive.is or the Wayback Machine can help you explore not only internet history but also the history of a particular article, helping you determine when it was published or when, or if, it ever changed due to a correction. Fact checkers also check this kind of information, and you can look at fact checking or debunking websites to save time.



Trainer tips

Feel free to use other examples or to have a set topic for everyone to explore on these tools.

Unit 3 > Part B: Photos, Videos and Social Media > Lesson 1: Reused photos and videos

 TRAINER NOTES

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Learn to be on the lookout for repurposed photos and videos
- ▶ Be comfortable using reverse image search to test whether an individual photo has been repurposed



Materials

- ▶ Computers



Time Needed

45 min.



Trainer preparation

Encourage participants who have iPhones to install Chrome. (Android users should already have it.)

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Some of the most insidious misinformation on the internet is in the form of photos and videos. Today we'll start talking about how these are manipulated, and how you can detect this manipulation. In particular, we're going to start by looking at photos that show something different from what they purport to show. Reverse image searches, while not always conclusive, are one of the quickest and most powerful tools to catch this misinformation and prevent its spread.



Process Question 5 min.

Why do you think photos and videos are particularly dangerous sources of misinformation?



Talking points 10 min.

A number of studies have found that visuals enhance our ability to recall information³, and this appears to apply just as much to dis- and mis-information as to true facts. We must therefore be aware that we're particularly susceptible to

3 Schnotz, W. (2002). Towards an integrated view of learning from text and visual displays. *Educational Psychology Review*, 14(1), 101-120. Retrieved from <http://www.csuchico.edu/~nschwartz/schnotz2002.pdf>

Dotted lines for taking notes.

disinformation when we're looking at images or video.

There are many ways photos and videos can be manipulated to distort the truth. Some of the most common are:

1. A real picture of a person, place, or situation re-used to represent a different person, place, or situation.
2. A forgery, i.e., a photo edited with design software (such as Photoshop) to add or delete certain components.
3. A photo used selectively to paint a distorted picture. This can include photos in which crucial elements are cropped out, changing or even reversing the meaning of the image; and photos that while themselves real, show only a small piece of reality and therefore distort the truth.

In the next few lessons, we're going to learn about these different types of misinformation and how you can detect each.

In this lesson, we'll concentrate on the first type of photo misinformation: re-purposed photos.

Breaking news situations are particularly susceptible to this kind of hoax. For example, after every major shooting, trolls circulate photos of comedian Sam Hyde, claiming he's a suspect.

Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 1, Introduction, Vegas Shooting.

This man has been accused several times. *Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 1, Introduction, Nice Attack Hoax.*



Process questions

Why is this especially problematic? How does stereotyping play a strong role in some of these examples?



Talking points

The man in the picture, Veerender Jubal, received a death threat that included his home address and phone number. *Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 1, Introduction, Man Falsely Accused.*

After the Baltimore protests and riots in 2015, a lot of false images of looting showed up. *Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 1, Introduction, Baltimore Protests and Riots.*



Process questions

What is especially harmful about the falsehoods in this example?



Activity 1 15 min.

As always with information online, there's two key tips to keep in mind:

sometimes using TinEye is more helpful (see below).

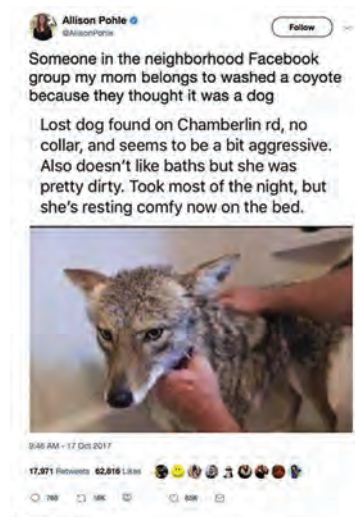
Steps:

1. Right-click the image. (On your phone, tap the image to open it as a full-screen view.)
2. Click “Search Google for image.” (On Mobile, press your finger to the screen, hold, and choose “Search Google for this image.”)
3. Scroll down to where you see “Pages that include matching images.”
4. Look for the earliest date you can find (results will not be in this order, however) and also look for reputable news outlets.

Method B: TinEye

This is a method you can use regardless of what web browser you’re using. It will also show you the earliest usages of an image.

1. Save the picture you want to verify. (On your phone, press the picture on your screen and hold until you see an option to save it.)
2. In your browser, go to tineye.com.
3. Select “upload image” and choose the image you want to verify. Then, if you click on one of the images returned in the search, you can toggle to compare it to the picture you submitted.
4. In the drop-down menu, choose “Oldest.”



Examples:

This photo is being represented as a case of someone mistaking a coyote for a dog.

Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 1, Activity 1.

A reverse image search will reveal it’s actually from a 2014 Daily Mail story about a family who adopted a coyote as a baby and keep it as a pet (intentionally).

This photo supposedly shows a child’s close encounter with a bird. Notice “photo by unknown.”

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A reverse image search reveals no bird in the original. And the photo credit should go to Adrian Murray. *Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 1, Activity 1.*



 **Process questions** 5 min.

What did you learn from this process? What can you conclude if you turn up an earlier user of a picture? What can you conclude if you don't?

 **Talking points**

Remember: Reverse image search is not always going to reveal a straightforward answer. If you can find an earlier use from a different situation, then you know you're dealing with misinformation. If your search doesn't turn up any prior uses of that picture, it's probably original, but not necessarily. You might also mention that a lot of "harmless" fakes on social media tend to be of animals and the "surprising" natural world. The natural world can indeed surprise... but there are limits!

 **Conclusions** 5 min.

The internet is full of repurposed photos, which the unscrupulous claim represent one thing when they really represent something else. They may say the photo is of a certain place, time, or event. Reverse image search is not foolproof, but in these cases it often lets us determine that a picture has been used before, or has been altered. We'll talk more about alteration in the next lesson.

Unit 3 > Part B > Lesson 2: Photo alteration

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Learn to be wary of photo alteration
- ▶ Learn to search for the textual elements of memes to determine their veracity



Time Needed

55 min. — 1 hr. 5 min.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

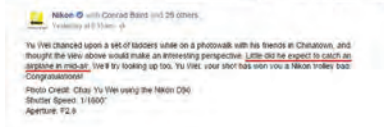
Another common occurrence on the internet is photos that have been altered to distort the truth. This includes photos or memes that contain false textual information. We're going to look at how you can determine if photos have been altered, or memes made up.



Activity 1 15 min.

Choose one or both of the following examples to discuss as a class.

1. Show participants the following picture and discuss:





Process questions

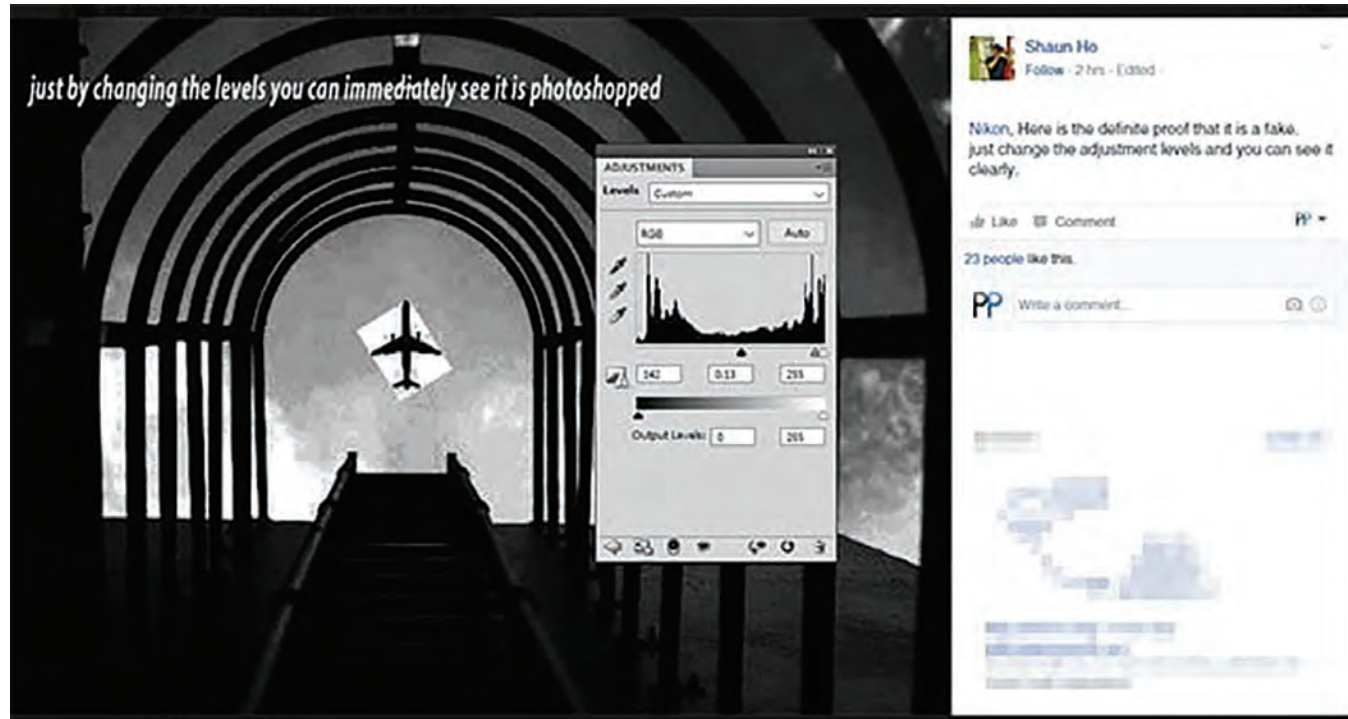
Do you have reason to doubt this picture? Why or why not?

It won a prize in a 2016 Nikon Singapore contest.



Talking points

Closer examination (a second look, really), even without technology, reveals the fakery. Yet Nikon originally awarded the photo a prize. Nikon’s Facebook followers pointed out that it was a fake before Nikon caught the error.⁴



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⁴ https://www.digitaltrends.com/photography/nikon-photo-contest-fail/?utm_source=divr.it&utm_medium=twitter

2. Another popular topic for photo alterations is current events and political controversies.

Linda NRA Supporter @LindaCo03364065 · 5h
#EmmaGonzalez

Proudly shredding The Constitution.
Horrifying to every educated American



  **Process questions**

Do you have reason to doubt this picture? Why or why not?

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Talking points

Participants should cite Name It to Tame It responses, that something with such shock value should be approached with skepticism. The Name It to Tame It steps:

1. **Pause:** Turn your head away from the screen or paper.
2. **Ask:** What am I feeling?
3. **Say:** The name of the feeling to yourself.



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You might also mention that a lot of fakes tend to emerge out of current events and breaking news situations.



Activity 2 15 min.

Optional: Have participants reverse-image search the second image to find the original. TinEye will help here.

Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 2, Activity 2 for links.

Now break participants up into groups of 3-4. Give them the false picture together with the original:



How can you tell when a photo has been altered?

1. Start with a gut check — Name It to Tame It! Does the photo make you feel angry? Does it seem believable? The Name It to Tame It steps:
 - a. **Pause:** Turn your head away from the screen or paper.
 - b. **Ask:** What am I feeling?
 - c. **Say:** The name of the feeling to yourself.
2. Look for elements that seem out of place. Do shadows all point in the same direction? If there's signage in the photo, what language is it written in?
3. Reverse-image search it! You will often find the original, unaltered image.



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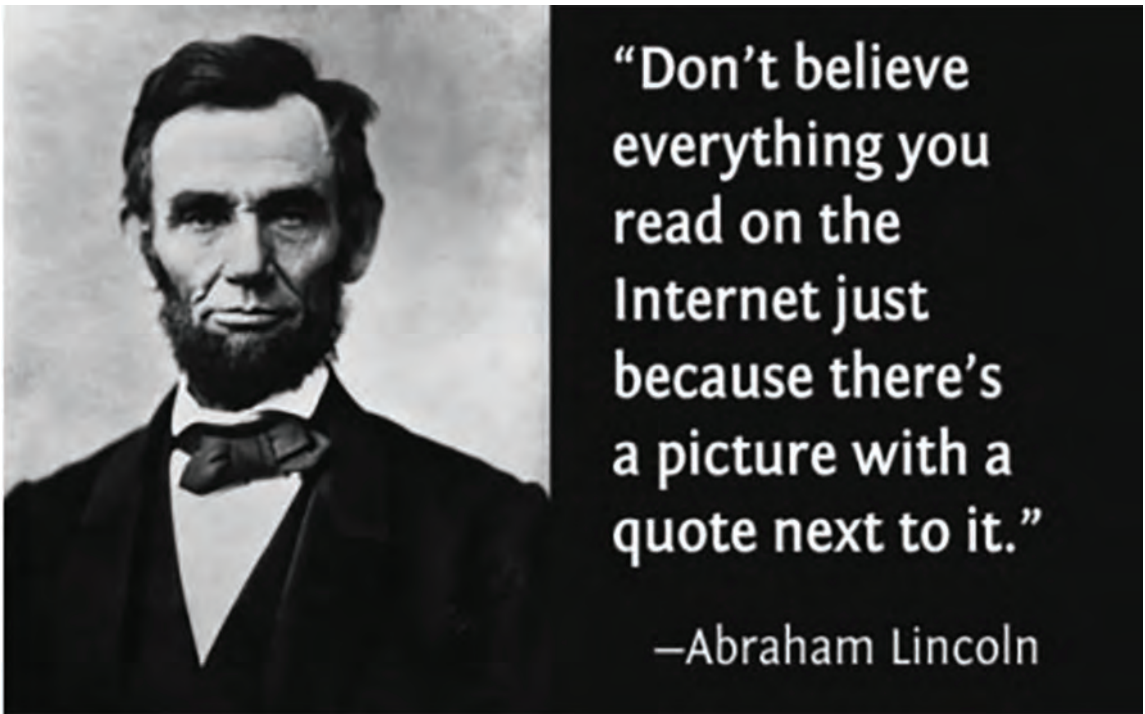
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 **Activity 3** 15 min.

One type of photo alteration to be particularly careful of is the text-based meme. Just about anyone can take an image and pair it with text that they've made up, or at least with words that the pictured individual never spoke.



Doing that, we see a glitch where part of the eagle’s wing disappears. This indicates a problem with the CGI rendering of the eagle. There’s also several frames where a shadow appears out of nowhere, and in the wrong place.

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Conclusions 5 min.

It’s surprisingly easy to alter photos and even video in a way that completely changes the content’s meaning. As always, Name It to Tame It is your first line of defense. Reverse image searching can help establish if the picture has been altered. And don’t forget to Care Before You Share. You are the ultimate gatekeepers who prevent the spread of misinformation!

Unit 3 > Part B > Lesson 4: Tracing photos

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Solidify their knowledge about repurposed images, altered images and selective images
- ▶ Solidify their photo research skills



Materials

- ▶ Badges for the competition winners
- ▶ Computers accessible (can be used in teams), pre-loaded with images to be checked



Time Needed

30-40 min.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

You've learned a lot in the past few lessons about what kind of photo manipulations are out there. Now let's put what you've learned to the test!



Activity 1 20-30 min.

Break the participants up into groups of 2 or 3. Give all groups the same picture to debunk or verify, and time them to see who can come up with an answer the quickest. Pictures can be found on the slideshow for Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 4.

Repeat with the next example, and so on.

Add together the rankings for each group (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.) The one with the overall lowest ranking is the overall winner, and members receive badges.



Talking points

If participants need reminding, here are the steps for reverse image search:

Method A: Google Chrome

Reverse image searches are easiest if you're using Google Chrome as your browser. For this reason, you may want to

Examples:

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 **#ThePersistence** ✓
@ScottPresler
[Follow](#)

Speaks Volumes: Republicans have denounced racists & democrats refuse to denounce Antifa.

The Hate He Dares Not Speak
#MondayMotivation



6:33 AM - 14 Aug 2017

Answer:

This one turns out to be re-used AND doctored. *Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 4, Activity 1.*

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Unit 3 > Part B > Lesson 5: Fake social media accounts

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Learn to question the authenticity of social media accounts
- ▶ Learn the common signs of fake accounts



Materials

- ▶ Examples as handouts or projected with a computer



Time Needed

35 min.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Much of the misinformation on the internet gets spread by fake social media accounts, which aren't what they appear to be. Sometimes a real person is behind the account, and sometimes it is run by a bot, a piece of computer code that masquerades as a human.



Process questions

Why is social media a fertile environment for disinformation? Why would someone want to create a fake social media account?



Talking points 5 min.

Social media is an all too convenient tool for spreading disinformation because it is easy to access and use — almost anyone can publish anything. In addition, they are relatively anonymous, and let messages spread quickly. The logic and standards that apply to journalists do not apply to most users of social media. Disinformation on social media spreads further and faster than corrective information. That's why it's important to stop the spread of disinformation as early as possible, and it's up to all of us to do this.

So how do you know if you're looking at a real social media account, representing a real person? There are a number of checks you can do. Here are some of the most effective. But keep in mind, you might not get a definitive answer. Weigh up the evidence as you go.

Nimmo at the Digital Forensic Research Lab at the Atlantic Council.⁵

3. Look at the name really carefully. Can you tell the difference between @RealDonaldTrump and @RealDonaldTrump? The second one uses capital “i”s where the lowercase “L”s should be. Type the user name as it should appear into Twitter or Google and see if the post you’re looking for is still there.
4. Reverse-image search the photo. Lots of fake profiles steal photos from real people, which means that when we share their posts, we’re not just sharing misinformation, but we might be hurting that real person too. Be suspicious if your search turns up lots of different names.
5. Does the account follow thousands of users, or have thousands of shares, but only has a handful of followers or friends? That’s a sign of a bot.
6. And remember... CARE BEFORE YOU SHARE. If you’re not sure, don’t share it.



Talking points 5 min.

First, the idea of some kind of fantastic pill about to hit the market in 24 hours is definitely designed to trigger a “Wow!” response, so there’s reason to be skeptical from the beginning. “Limitless” also refers to a movie and TV show featuring a character that took a pill that gave him special powers, which is an extreme reference for a mainstream news outlet. The account didn’t start recently, and reverse image searching the NBC News logo won’t tell us anything. But 1,500-odd followers for a major network seems like a pretty small following. And the name of the account is a bit suspicious: Does NBC really have an account just for stories about the mind? If we Google “NBC mind”, we don’t find any unit by that name. On balance, these add up to several reasons to doubt the authenticity of this account.



Conclusions 5 min.

Spotting fake accounts is a fairly easy way of telling whether you should lower your trust in a particular piece of information. The answer you get might not always be definitive. But just being aware that accounts can be fake, and often created to push a certain agenda, can get you thinking more critically about content you see on social media, and that’s always a good thing.

⁵ Ninno, B. (2017). #BotSpot: Twelve ways to spot a bot. Medium.com. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/dfrlab/botspot-twelve-ways-to-spot-a-bot-aedc7d9c110c>

Unit 3 > Part B > Lesson 6: Fake chat messages



TRAINER NOTES

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Recognize that screenshots of text chats can be faked
- ▶ Learn to apply common-sense skepticism to text screenshots that they come across



Time Needed

20 min.

Procedure



Introduction 2 min.

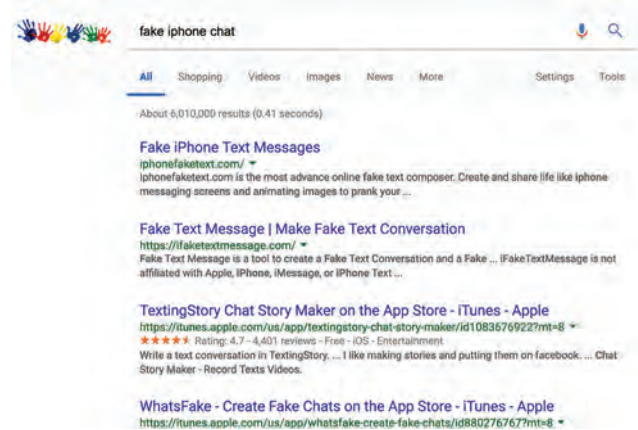
Fake chat messages are another type of misinformation that seems to be gaining currency. Perhaps you have seen screenshots that purported to be text conversations involving a famous person, such as Justin Bieber or Donald Trump. How would you know whether these conversations are real or not?



Activity 1 10 min.

Have participants search for “fake iPhone chat” on their phones. If they don’t all have smartphones, let them pair up and share.

Their results should look something like this:



Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 7, Fake Reviews.



Process questions

What signals did participants look for?



Trainer tips

The next section will supply answers, highlighting what consumers should be on the lookout for.



Talking points 5 min.

There are a few signs that tend to point to fake reviews, and we should be aware of these. We compiled these tips based on an episode of NPR's Planet Money⁶, and an interview with a computer scientist who specializes in fake review detection (the computer scientist spoke to us anonymously because his company didn't want to be on the record on this sensitive topic).

1. First, be aware that most reviews aren't fake. The big online retailer and review forums all have teams dedicated to ferreting out fake reviews. But they're in an arms race with the fraudsters, so it's a constant battle and they can't keep all fake reviews at bay.
2. Ask yourself: Does the language sound unnatural, like it was taken from marketing material?
3. Are there non-obvious terms used in multiple reviews, as if reviewers are following a script?
4. Did the positive reviews all cluster around a small stretch of time, like just a few days?
5. Are there a lot of reviews from new accounts?
6. Are the reviews clustered mostly around 5 stars and 1 stars, with very few in the middle?
7. Play the numbers game: trust a product with lots of reviews, and only 4 out of 5 stars, over one that got 5 stars but only had a handful of reviewers. Keep in mind that people do tend to complain more than they praise, so take those negative reviews with a grain of salt.
8. And finally, be wary of using reviews to make decisions that really require better evidence. Do you want to risk taking a supplement that may have side effects because 70 people you don't know say it worked for them?

Finally, you might want to try pasting the product or service URL into a tool. *Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 7, Warm Up.*

They're not foolproof, but can help you to detect whether the reviews you're looking at are reliable.

⁶ Schellmann, H. (2018). Episode 850: The fake review hunter. NPR's Planet Money. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2018/06/27/623990036/episode-850-the-fake-review-hunter?utm_term=nprnews&utm_content=buffer794&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer



Talking points

Given its role in a lawsuit, it seems likely that the first set of reviews is fake. Participants should have found that the reviews appeared within days of each other, and repeated the exact phrase “how bright the lights on the cable are.” There aren’t many reviews overall, and they are weighted towards 5s and 1s.

As far as we can tell, the second set of reviews is genuine. None of the language is particularly unnatural or repetitive, and the reviews are spread out over time. There is a good number of reviews and a decent spread among ratings. However, participants should question whether a powerful sedative is something they should buy based on reviews alone.



Conclusions 5 min.

Fraudulent reviews can make life difficult for consumers, but major retailers do often remove these. Still, you’re likely to come across fake reviews in your shopping life, so play the numbers game: Use the criteria we discussed to judge the probability that a set of reviews suffer from a significant number of fakes.

Product review worksheet

Please see Unit 3, Part B, Lesson 7.

| Criterion: Is this present? | Yes | Unsure | No |
|--|-----|--------|----|
| Unnatural language (like marketing material)? | | | |
| Non-obvious terms used in multiple reviews (looks like a script)? | | | |
| Positive reviews cluster around small timespan? | | | |
| Lots of reviews from new accounts? | | | |
| Reviews clustered mostly around 5 and 1? | | | |
| Only a few reviews overall? | | | |
| Does this kind of product really need better evidence than just reviews for me to buy it? (For example, health products) | | | |

the same time, when there's a lot of evidence for something, it's very likely to be true. Of course, news outlets don't always do a great job of explaining how the science is changing, or what the current scientific consensus is, but before we can pick apart science news we first have to understand the nature of science itself.



Activity 1 20 min.

When scientists want to explain something about the world, they write a “theory.” The word “theory” doesn't itself mean the idea is uncertain, however. The “theory” of gravity predicts that when an apple is dislodged from a tree, it will fall to the ground.

Now you are going to act as scientists yourselves, and engage in the process of testing ideas and trying to reduce uncertainty. You are going to develop your own scientific model.

Break the class up into small groups.

Instructor will use the videos on this webpage throughout. *Please show the video on Examples document Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 1, Activity 1, Video 2.*

We're going to develop a model of something called a mystery tube. A mystery tube has four strings that emerge from four numbered holes. We are going to develop a model of what's going on inside the tube, based only on what we can observe, and we can only observe the outside of the tube.



Here is our initial evidence. (Show Movie 1.)

Based on this observation, how do you think the strings are connected inside the tube?

Draw your model.

What do you think will happen when pull the string at the bottom left?



Now watch what happens when we pull the string at bottom left. (Show Movie 2.)

Was your first model accurate? Did it correctly predict what ended up happening?

If not, redraw your model.

Now, what do you think will happen when we pull the string at bottom right?



(Show Movie 3.)

Was your second model accurate?

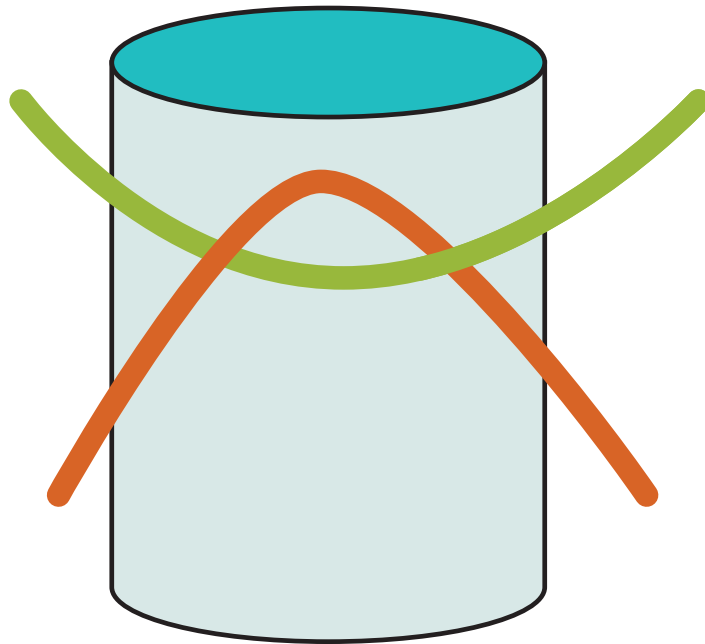
If not, redraw your model.

Finally, let's see what happens when several strings are pulled.



(Show Movie 4.)

We may need an entirely new model! To speed this up a bit, we'll let you in on the secret of the Mystery Tube .



TRAINER NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.



Process questions

What does this exercise illustrate about the scientific process? Are scientists always sure of what they're going to find?



Conclusions 5 min.

Scientists have to observe or test a given phenomenon many, many times before they can come to a good understanding. We often hear about the latest stages in this process, especially in sciences like medicine that are not as well developed (compared to, say, physics). Inevitably, along the way, scientists will get some things wrong. But it's all a part of the process of finding scientific truth.

Lesson Overview

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Familiarize themselves with the key indicators that differentiate informative from misleading science reporting

Materials

- ▶ Computer and projector for video
- ▶ Health News tip sheet handout
- ▶ Health Anecdote handout
- ▶ Science News checklist
- ▶ Health News Evaluation Chart

Time Needed

1 hr.

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Procedure

Introduction 5 min.

There's a lot of science news out there, and even some of the best news organizations can unfortunately engage in scaremongering, or failing to put new studies in their proper context. But some key indicators can tell us when we're reading good, informative science reporting, and when we should be more skeptical about scientific claims.

Warm-up 5 min.

Please see Example document, Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 2, Warm Up for video.

Process questions

What lessons stood out to you from this video?

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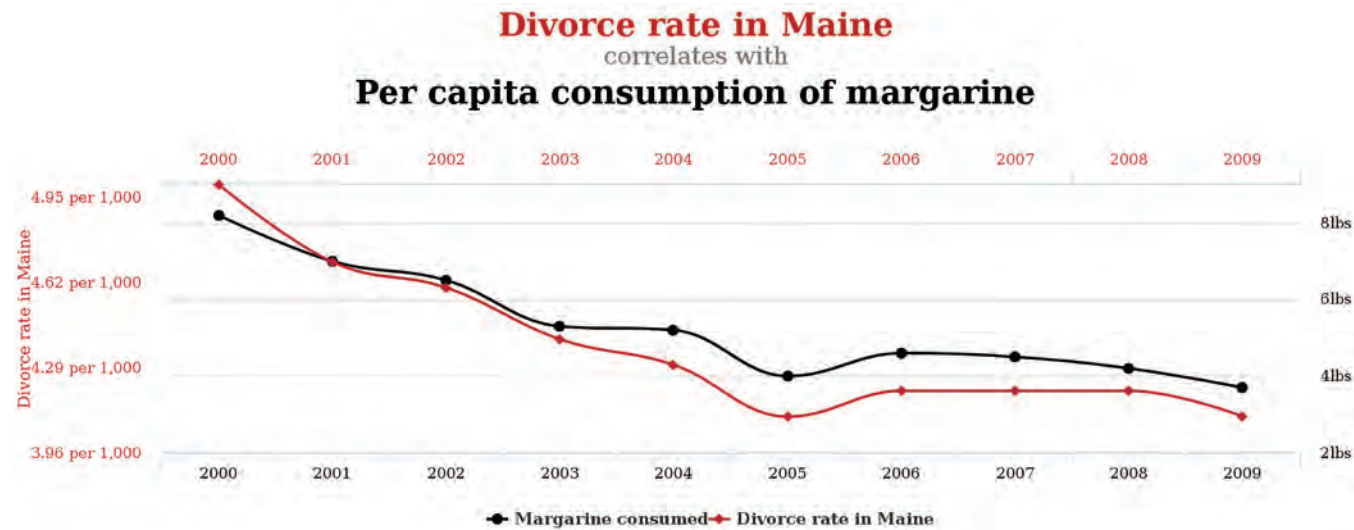
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Sometimes, things appear to be correlated even when there's no real relationship there. Take the following:



Is it really possible that eating less margarine leads to fewer divorces? Or the other way around? No, there are so many data sets in the world that if you look at enough, you can find funny pairings that will appear to be related, but are not.

A lot of scientific stories will say two things are “correlated” or “linked,” but this does not mean one causes the other. That does not mean that any correlated phenomena are automatically a bogus relationship. But you should proceed with caution.

6. Does the story talk about cost and availability?

Lots of newly discovered medical treatments can be described as “promising.” But if the treatment is too expensive for most people to use, it won’t matter. Also, stories often hype up new treatments long before they’re actually available to the public. Does the story just talk about research or about actual plans to release and market the treatment?

7. Does the story talk about benefits and harms?

First, benefits: How effective is the treatment? Is this quantified? And few treatments are without their side effects. What are these? If they’re not mentioned, the article isn’t very trustworthy.

8. Is this disease-mongering?

Sometimes a story will exaggerate the severity of a condition, or medicalize what’s actually a normal state of health.

clinical context for readers interested in understanding the limitations of cancer screening.”¹¹

HNR gave the HealthDay story 1 out of 5, saying, “The story addresses a key caveat — that the study has not been published in a journal and therefore hasn’t been rigorously scrutinized. However, it doesn’t give a clear description of what the comparison therapies (aka “usual care”) were. Nor does it provide cost data for the combination pill, which seems to be a key drawback since the study aims to explore whether it can be used to improve blood pressure treatment worldwide. Most significantly, it lacks independent sources who could weigh in on the significance of the findings.”¹²

HNR gave the CNN story 5 out of 5, saying, “The story is strong and scores well because it discusses critical data from the study, offers comments from independent sources and provides information on limitations. It didn’t delve into either costs or harms, but in this case, there seems to be minimal need for either, due to the nature of the research. One minor point we think the story could have made: It remains to be seen if this style of intervention ultimately leads to a reduced risk of stroke, serious heart disease, and/or heart attacks, especially if there is not a long-term barbershop program in place.”¹³

Don’t jump to conclusions about what outlets tend to produce good or bad health news stories! Performance in this area can be quite variable.



Activity 2 15 min.

Ask the participants: What about health information they get from friends, or on social media? Is that usually good or bad information?

Have volunteers read out the following anecdotes.¹⁴ After each anecdote, discuss: Is this good information that can support your health decision-making? Why or why not?

1. Your best friend Juan was suffering from a bad flu. He tried ibuprofen, but he just felt worse and worse. So he did two sessions with a certified reiki master, and he began feeling better. After three sessions, his flu was gone. He concluded that reiki works.
2. On Facebook, your old school friend Tatyana announced that she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She found that green tea extract helped relieve her nausea from chemotherapy, and she says it eventually killed off the tumor. She’s now cancer-free, so she says the green tea extract works.
3. Your aunt Florence has suffered from chronic pain for over 20 years. She heard about vitamin B6 on the news. She started taking super-high doses six weeks ago. She feels better now on most days, so she concludes that B6 works.

11 Cautious, independent voices help round out NPR’s look at experimental blood test for cancer review. (2018). HealthNewsReview.org. Retrieved from <https://www.healthnewsreview.org/review/cautious-independent-voices-help-round-out-nprs-look-at-experimental-test-for-cancer/>

12 Blood pressure pill shows promise compared to ‘usual care,’ HealthDay says, never explaining what that is review. (2018). HealthNewsReview.org. Retrieved from <https://www.healthnewsreview.org/review/three-in-one-blood-pressure-pill-shows-promise-compared-to-usual-care-healthday-says-never-explaining-what-that-is/>

13 A pat on the back to CNN for its well-written story on barbershops and blood pressure review. (2018). HealthNewsReview.org. Retrieved from <https://www.healthnewsreview.org/review/a-pat-on-the-back-to-cnn-for-its-well-written-story-on-barbershops-and-blood-pressure/>

14 Much of the examples, and the list of problems with anecdote, come from this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDIPoSSVPuA>

- 6. Cost and availability?
- 7. Benefits and harms?
- 8. Is this disease-mongering?
- 9. Is this a real journal?
- 10. Who funded the study?

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Please see Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 2, Activity 2 for handout.



Handout: Health news evaluation chart

Place a checkmark in the “bad,” “so-so,” or “good” space to evaluate each aspect of the story.

| | Bad | So-so | Good |
|------------------------------|-----|-------|------|
| Other studies mentioned? | | | |
| Sample size? | | | |
| Mice or men? | | | |
| Correlation or causation? | | | |
| Cost and availability? | | | |
| Benefits and harms? | | | |
| Is it new, and is that good? | | | |
| Disease-mongering? | | | |
| Real journal? | | | |
| Who funded? | | | |

Unit 3 > Part C > Lesson 3: Good and bad sources of health information



TRAINER NOTES

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Learn to refer to several go-to references sites for health information
- ▶ Understand why supplement manufacturers get away with false claims



Materials

- ▶ Computer and projector
- ▶ Flip chart paper and sticky notes



Time Needed

55 min.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

Since we hear so many health claims — from the news, social media, and our friends and family — we often want to check information out for ourselves to see what's true. Unfortunately, if you don't use a quality reference site, you could end up misinformed. In this lesson we'll talk about where to go for quality health information.



Warm-up 5 min

Ask participants: Where do you find health and science information? If you or someone you loved was suffering from certain symptom or a certain condition, where would you go for accurate information?

Participants will write their responses on sticky notes — as many sticky notes as they need to list out all their answers. Participants should write only one response per sticky note. Have participants place their stickies on a flip chart paper. As each person places a sticky, have him or her read out what is written on it. Any others with a similar answer should all come forward and read their answer, and group similar ideas together. Go through all of the answers.



Process questions

Which of these would you think are reliable or not reliable?

Is Googling always the best approach for finding this information?



Talking Points 10 min.

There is a lot of misinformation about health on the internet, for some of the same reasons there’s misinformation generally. There are other factors too: People are eager to share “what worked for me,” despite all the dangers in that approach, as we discussed in Lesson 2. There’s also a lot of people who are profiting off of health misinformation; for example, by selling supplements without much evidence that these drugs actually work.

Unfortunately, these bad sources far outnumber good sources on the web. But there’s some highly reliable and easy-to-use resources that we can recommend to you.

Please see Examples document, Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 3, Warm Up for presentation of the following examples.

Cochrane Library: Reviews thousands of studies to provide overviews of current scientific findings on health topics, presented in layman’s terms.

Webmd and Mayo Clinic: Reliable sources of information on disease and injury, including symptoms, prevention and treatments.

World Health Organization: Tracks the spread of infectious diseases around the world.

Centers for Disease Control: Tracks the spread of infectious disease in the U.S., and provides information on a variety of health topics.

FDA: U.S. agency that regulates drug approvals and many food products, and regulates nutritional labeling.

USDA: U.S. agency that regulates safety of meat and egg products.



Process questions

How can we tell that these are reliable sources?



Activity 1 15 min.

Split participants up into groups of 3-4. Give each one of the following case studies. (It’s OK if some groups have the same case study.)

Then ask them to find the answers to the case study questions. First, try to find the answer using the original instincts about how to find medical information, discussed at the start of the lesson. Second, choose the most appropriate reliable source of information described above, and see how this information differs.

When they are done, they will share their findings with the group: what information source did they use at first, what did

this reveal, what did they change their strategy to, and what did they find that was different.



TRAINER NOTES

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Case study #1

Your friend Karen is feeling depressed. Her cousin recommended that she take St. John’s Wort. Karen has turned to you for your advice. What would you advise her?

Good sample answer: Use Cochrane Library. *Please see Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 2, Case Study 1.* Scroll down to “Plain language summary.” This will tell you that trials found St. John’s wort was similarly effective as standard antidepressants, but it seemed less effective in non-German speaking countries, and flaws in the studies could not be ruled out. Plus, the St. John’s products on the market vary a lot, and it might interact with other drugs to cause side effects. Cochrane advises that patients wanting to use St. John’s Wort should see a health professional.

Case study #2

The bottle of milk in your fridge smells funny, but the expiration date says it should still be good. Should you drink it?

Good sample answer: The FDA and USDA are the agency that regulate food safety. Googling “expiration dates FDA” we find this site. *Please see Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 3, Case Study 2.*

Click “Are dates for food safety or quality?” and you’ll find that dates are an indication of quality only. If you think the milk smells funny, don’t drink it!

Case study #3

Your Facebook friend says Zika virus is now in the U.S., putting pregnant women at risk. Is this true?

Good sample answer: Your best sources on current and potential epidemics are the World Health Organization (global) and Centers for Disease Control (U.S. only). Google “Zika WHO” to find the organization’s Zika page. (Make sure to check the result is actually a WHO website. Another way to do this is first find the WHO website so you know its URL, “who.int”, and then use that to do a site-specific search on Google: “zika site:who.int”).

We find this site: *please see Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 3, Case Study 3.*

Click on Information for travellers visiting Zika affected countries

You’ll see pregnant women are advised to avoid Category 1 and 2 countries — but the U.S. is category 3.

OR, do a similar search for the CDC: *please see Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 3, Case Study 3.*

You’ll find that there’s no mosquito-borne Zika transmission in the U.S., but the disease can spread through sex, so condoms should be used if one partner has been to a Zika-infected country.

Case study #4

Your friend Manuel wants to know what symptoms might indicate he's having a heart attack, so he knows how to act in an emergency.

Good sample answer: Search "heart attack" together with "WebMD", "site:webmd.com", "Mayo Clinic", or "site:mayoclinic.org."

Please see Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 3, Case Study 4.

Please see Unit 3, Part C, Lesson 3, Activity 1 for Case Study Handout and Answers.

Information for Consumers on Using Dietary Supplements



Dietary Supplements can be beneficial to your health — but taking supplements can also involve health risks.

Because dietary supplements are under the "umbrella" of foods, FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) is responsible for the agency's oversight of these products. The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) of 1994, which amended the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, created a new regulatory framework for the safety and labeling of dietary supplements. **FDA is not authorized to review dietary supplement products for safety and effectiveness before they are marketed.**



Then watch the rest of the video.



Talking points 5 min.

Just to be sure it was clear to you: the person speaking in the video was not Obama, it was comedian Jordan Peele. This was one example of how misinformation is evolving, taking advantage of technology advances. It took a while for BuzzFeed to produce this video, but the tools they used are publicly available. There’s a variety of new types of fakery emerging, including fake audio, for example, a recording falsely claiming that international soccer star Diego Maradona had died spread widely on the messaging app WhatsApp.¹⁶ Some predict that “augmented reality,” which uses your phone to seemingly overlay information and imagery on the world around you (e.g., Pokemon Go), could be the next arena for disinformation.



Process questions

But after all we’ve learned, what’s the best reaction to new types of fakes like this? Do we just give up?

How does watching the video make you feel? Do you think you have the skills to handle most disinformation after what you’ve learned in the course? What can you do to prepare yourself for the changes in technology?



Talking points

Hopefully you feel confident about your ability to detect disinformation and to battle it by Caring Before You Share. Technology will evolve — that’s inevitable. But now you are ambassadors for healthy information habits, and can help spread a new culture of news literacy. You know how to make yourself more resilient to emotional manipulation by Naming It to Tame it. You also now know to be on the alert for new types of disinformation and misinformation, and to educate yourselves as new technologies emerge.



Activity 1 15 min.

As a class, brainstorm different tactics and resources participants could use to deal with new forms of misinformation.

If they get stuck, use one or more of the following prompts.

1. You hear an audio file that a friend sent you on WhatsApp. In the recording, a well known celebrity admits to cheating on his girlfriend. What would you do?
2. You see a video that claims to show a cop shooting an unarmed suspect. What do you do?

¹⁶ Funke, D. (2018). Meet the next misinformation format: Fake audio messages. Poynter Online. Retrieved from <https://www.poynter.org/news/meet-next-misinformation-format-fake-audio-messages>

references so you can view the original source.



Process questions

How do you feel now about your ability to tackle misinformation and manipulation? What would you tell friends or family who say they struggle to tell fact from fiction? What is one simple skill you learned that you could teach someone else? Who will you teach it to?

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Conclusions 5 min.

Make clear to participants that they are the future of information literacy. Not only do they have new skills and knowledge, they are now empowered to put those skills into use and to be information literacy ambassadors. It's not a matter of going it alone: There is now a circle of us who can do more to spread news literacy in our community.

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Talking points

Participants should hopefully bring up the following points.

Name It to Tame It:

1. **Pause:** Turn your head away from the screen or paper.
2. **Ask:** What am I feeling?
3. **Say:** The name of the feeling to yourself.



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What type of content is this — information or persuasion?

Challenging stereotypes and biases: Is this content trading on biases people have, perhaps subtly?

Ways to judge written content:

1. Check the date
2. Go to the source
3. Evaluate journalistic standards
4. Verify sources and citations
5. Verify evidence
6. Check with the fact-checkers

Checking photos: Might use reverse image search. Be aware of photo re-use, alteration, and selection effects.

Care Before You Share:

1. Name It to Tame It!
2. Take **responsibility**. Know that YOU are the information gatekeeper. Don't spread misinformation!
3. **Acknowledge** what you may not know.
4. If you have time, **check** it out! — do what you can to verify information.
5. If you're still not sure it's true, **don't share it**.



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Pass out the Care Before You Share worksheet, and walk people through it. Ask: what would you do for each step? Let people brainstorm some ideas.

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Unit 3 > Part D > Lesson 3: Creating and Sharing Credible Information

Lesson Overview



Learning Objectives

Participants will:

- ▶ Further solidify what they have learned about the media in previous lessons, using skills including research, teamwork, evaluation, communication, and synthesis



Materials

- ▶ Pens and paper for brainstorming
- ▶ Computers with Internet
- ▶ Producing News worksheet



Time Needed

40 min.

Procedure



Introduction 5 min.

In this lesson, we're going to pull together what you've learned about the media, and apply it to create some media ourselves!



Activity 1 30 min.

Ask participants to think about an issue or topic they care about. Do they want to see more recycling? Do they want to promote someone running for their local council? Is there an amazing new food they want to share? The topic should be something that the participant doesn't have all the answers to already (e.g., it shouldn't be just about their family and friends). Ask participants to tell the group what their topic is, in a few words.

Then ask participants, individually or in pairs, to create a social media post that communicates on the topic they care about. (Individual work may be better if people feel strongly about the topics and there's little convergence on topics. Pair work will help if not everybody uses or has access to social media, however.) If needed, the "post" can be written out on paper instead of created with a social media app, or it could be the text of an email that a participant might send to a group of friends. Ask participants, while creating, to think about the veracity of information in their posts. They should feel free to fact-check anything in the post as they create. They can also write an opinion piece, clearly labeling it as such.

Then bring the individuals and/or pairs together in groups of 3-4. Each individual or pair should share their social media post with the group. The other participants should reflect and feed back to the presenter: What is your reaction to this post? Where did the information come from, and where was it fact-checked? What requires fact-checking, and what doesn't? Participants can offer constructive advice to their fellow participants on fact-checking resources and techniques.



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