

CRITICAL THINKING_

There is more information at our fingertips than ever before.

The internet is a whole world of knowledge which everyone can access and add to. This can be really helpful. If you want to answer a question, find something out for your homework, find out what your favourite celebrity is up to or watch hours of funny cat videos, it's all there at the touch of a button.

But with so much information, how do you work out what's true and what's untrue? What's right and what's wrong?

That's where critical thinking comes in.

By thinking clearly and carefully about what is being said online, you can help sort the good information from the bad.

Critical thinking can also help you to avoid online pitfalls like falling victim to scams, believing things which are fake or untrue, or being sold something without you realising it.

Be a critical thinker by asking yourself the following questions when you see any info- be it a picture, article, social media post or video - online:



Who said it?



When did they say it?



What's this person's argument?



What do I know about this person?



Who is the audience for this piece of information?

Is anyone saying anything different to this?



Who is really providing this content? Is it being paid for -like an ad or sponsored content?



If it's an ad, are they only showing me the positives? What could the negatives be?

Advertising

Internet advertising can be confusing. From sponsored search results to adverts, it can be hard to spot when a brand is trying to sell you their product.

The law says that content like this must have 'sponsored by', 'ad' or 'advertising promotion' written somewhere. But these aren't always easy to spot.

Internet celebrities like vloggers often advertise products and again, it's not always easy to tell. Look out for the words '#ad' or '#spon' on YouTube videos to see when a brand has paid for their product to be promoted.

Clickbait

Websites and online platforms want you to click on them – that’s how they can make money from advertising.

But stories are often exaggerated to get you to click on them.

Have you ever spotted an article like these?

“You Won’t Believe What Happened Next!”

“A normal guy goes to buy milk. What happens next is epic”

“Five astonishing facts about [celebrity name]”

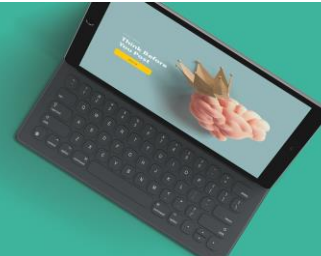
“Watch this video to discover the truth about [celebrity name]”

These are examples of clickbait. It’s important to think about why information is being presented in this way before clicking.

Rumours

False rumours are something that happen offline as well as online, but with the instant reach of social media sometimes false information and rumours can spread like wildfire.

Misunderstandings and misinformation can spread quickly online, so it’s important to remember that just because something is trending doesn’t mean it’s true.



The internet gives our children access to more information than ever before. It's a wonderful resource for education and entertainment, but not everything your child sees online will be true.

Helping your child become a discerning and savvy internet user is a major step towards keeping them safe online. Developing good critical thinking skills will help them avoid online scams, uncover hidden agendas and steer clear of false information.

There are lots of things that your child will need to learn to recognise. Here are some of the main things to help them look out for.

Advertising

Advertising isn't always easy to spot in the digital age. Brands can pay for their products to appear at the top of a list of search results, sponsor content on popular websites or get endorsements from internet celebrities.

The law says that all paid-for content should be indicated, but it would be easy enough for your child to miss these warnings. Look for words like 'ad' or 'sponsored content,' or #ad or #spon on social media posts.

Clickbait

There's a lot of competition for clicks and attention online, and some media outlets exaggerate to get people to click on their stories. Your child should look out for headlines like...

'You won't believe what happened next'

'This might be the most epic thing [celebrity name] has ever done'

'Five shocking facts about...'

Catchy headlines don't always indicate unreliable stories, but it's a good idea for your child to think about how information is presented and why those choices are made.

Rumours

False rumours aren't an online-only thing, but the internet and social media can help them spread. Lots of sources all saying the same thing is a good sign, but a misunderstanding about something like a band breaking up or a celebrity death can go viral in the blink of an eye – and corrections after the fact might not get the same amount of attention.

Official sources are generally more reliable, if not always immune to errors. On social media your child can look out for things like verified Twitter accounts (indicated with a blue tick mark) to show



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