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MY WORLD LESSON #7

# Where Do You Find Your News?

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## Overview

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Students explore the different ways people get news in today's world. The BBC *My World* video "Where Do You Find Your News?" introduces the topic. Students learn to distinguish more impartial news, which can be verified and is free from bias, from news that may lack independence or accountability. Students learn to curate news and build their own "news neighborhoods." They also explore how to navigate news with a "content filter" in order to obtain news that they find credible, meaningful, challenging, and relevant to their lives.

**Target audience:** English and Language Arts, Social Studies, Media Studies. Ages 11–14.

**Class time:** 45-60 minutes

**Student handouts:** "Where Do You Find Reliable News?" Informational article, "Evaluate Credibility of News Outlets" Guided practice, Check Your Media Literacy Assessment.

**Materials:** Computer or tablet with internet connection.

## Class structure and pacing

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1. 5 minutes Class warm-up activity
2. 15 minutes Informational article: "Where Do You Find Reliable News?"
3. 10 minutes *My World* video "Where Do You Find Your News?"
4. 5 minutes Whole-class discussion of focus questions
5. 10 minutes Guided Practice
6. 10 minutes Media Literacy Assessment

## Procedure

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1. Begin class with a brief warm-up discussion and brainstorming session.

■ **Open by making a master list of news outlets that students use or that are at least familiar to them. Ask:**

- What outlet would you use to find out what's going on in the world?
- How reliable is the outlet? Credible? Somewhat credible? Not credible?
- Do you think the outlet aims simply to report facts, or does it have another purpose in mind? What purpose might that be?
- Compare and contrast available outlets or channels of information.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**Navigate** news outlets and curate relevant, reliable information.

**Compare and contrast** news with other media on the internet.

**Identify and find** examples of the three concepts that differentiate news from other sources of information: verification, independence, and accountability.

### LESSON VOCABULARY

**accountable** *adj.* accepting responsibility for one's words and actions

**agenda** *n.* the underlying intentions or motives of a person or group

**curate** *v.* to gather a collection of material for a specific purpose

**echo chamber** *n.* a situation in which beliefs are reinforced and amplified by communication and repetition

■ **Explain that by the end of this lesson, students will be able to:**

- Identify news echo chambers.
- Develop digital filters to find reliable news outlets.
- Evaluate search results.
- Compare and contrast available outlets or channels of information.

2. Present the *My World* video “Where Do You Find Your News?” to begin the process of identifying credible news outlets.

■ **Before screening, write the following bullet points on the board.**

**Ask students to take notes or consider these points as they watch the video:**

- Listen for ways to determine how credible a news outlet is.
- Think about why trust is important for a news outlet.

■ **Ask students to share their observations.**

3. Analyze ideas about the credibility of different news outlets by having students read the informational article, “Where Do You Find Reliable News?” Instructional options include:

■ **Read each section as a class. Stop after each section to compare what the video showed with corresponding points in the article, such as:**

- the concepts that distinguish credible news outlets from less credible ones: verification, independence, accountability.
- the relative credibility of advertising, news-based entertainment, opinion-based editorials, and verified news.

■ **Read the entire article in pairs and discuss the question, “What makes a news outlet trustworthy?”**

4. Guide students’ analysis of the concepts in the video and article through whole-class or small-group discussion of focus questions.

■ **Ask students to discuss:**

- What steps can you take to verify the accuracy of a news report?
- What does it mean for a news outlet to be independent? Why is independence important?
- What does it mean for a news outlet to be characterized as accountable? Why is accountability important?

■ **Model how to use critical thinking skills when responding or adding to student answers.**

 **TIPS FROM**

 **Microsoft Education**

**Create engaging learning experiences tied to this Lesson with the following free Microsoft Education tools:**

**Utilize Flipgrid with this Lesson**

Guide students’ analysis of the credibility of different news outlets as shared in the video and article by posting focus questions in Flipgrid for students to share individually or in small groups. Continue the conversation on [Flipgrid!](#)

**Facilitate collaborative learning**

Post the ‘Check Your Media Literacy’, student handout into Teams; assign a point value and deadline. Review as handouts are turned in and get real-time understanding of how the lesson concepts have landed with your students and if you need to revisit a particular topic. Free education collaboration tools are at your fingertips with [Office 365](#).

5. Provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned in Guided Practice in assessing news outlets for credibility.

- **Ask students to work individually or in pairs as they build news neighborhoods and curate a list of reliable news outlets.**
- **Direct students to complete the Guided Practice handout to apply what they have learned in the lesson.**

6. Assess what students have learned and provide a chance to express their views about the purpose and value of news media.

- **Direct students to complete the assessment handout.**
- **Allow students to consult their notes if needed for short answers.**

## Extend and connect

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### ELEMENTARY/PRIMARY

(ages 6–10)

Go over examples of advertising, entertainment, opinion, and news. Ask students to use media outlets to find examples of each information form. Lead a discussion about the independence of the outlet and the differences between the types of information. You might help students make a table that compares their features. Point out that all of these forms may contain information that qualifies as “true,” but that independent, accountable news outlets can be relied upon to a greater degree for factually accurate information.

### HIGH SCHOOL/SECONDARY

(ages 15–18)

Ask students to compare various types of information outlets on a single news story. They should find one news outlet on which the story can be completely verified and cross-referenced; one outlet where the story has a noticeable point of view, even if its facts can be verified; and one where the report cannot be verified or cross-referenced. Discuss how credible students think each outlet is.

#### EDUCATION STANDARDS

##### Media Literacy

ISTE 3.a Students plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits.

ISTE 3.b Locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media.

ISTE 3.c Students curate information from digital resources using a variety of tools and methods to create collections of artifacts that demonstrate meaningful connections or conclusions.

ISTE 5.a Advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology.

##### CCSS English and Language Arts Reading Information

RI.6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.7.2 Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.9.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

##### Social Studies

RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

## Where Do You Find Reliable News?

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As recently as the 1990s, a vast majority of people learned what was happening in the world by reading their local newspaper and watching the evening news from one of a few major television networks. For better or worse, they mainly consumed the same national and international news and received similar information. This began to change with the arrival of cable news and then the internet.

**Wild West:** When it comes to quantity, news in today's internet market is nearly limitless. Advances in how quickly content is created, distributed, and shared globally means most people no longer consume news curated by one of only a few networks. We can get news from a large news outlet or we can turn to a single blog or to an organization a continent away. We can participate in debate and commentary about the news, and even create and publish our own content.

With such a large quantity of news and information available, it is up to us to navigate our own way through the news landscape. People do this by curating news for themselves, piecing together information from different outlets to make their own “news neighborhoods.”

This can result in news neighborhoods where people consume and share information with a point of view agreeable to them and with like-minded consumers—an **echo chamber**. In another news neighborhood, consumers may read news that reflects a different point of view. The two groups—each within an echo chamber, where all believe the same version of events—may fundamentally disagree with each other about what the truth is.

So how can we create our own news neighborhoods to provide ourselves with credible, impartial news, that is meaningful and relevant to us? Consider, for example, reports about the severity of an approaching hurricane. A social media post might advise that the storm may not be as severe as anticipated and that there is little to worry about. A radio report from a commercial news channel, on the other hand, might insist that people need to evacuate the area immediately because the hurricane may be the worst in recent years. A third report from the National Weather Service might ask citizens to remain at home for now, but be ready to evacuate if conditions change since the hurricane is expected to be a category 4 storm when it hits the area.

Which outlet offers the most credible information? To find out, evaluate their story against three criteria: verification, independence, and accountability.

### LESSON VOCABULARY

**accountable** *adj.* accepting responsibility for one's words and actions

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What Makes News Credible?	
<b>Verification</b>	Can the facts be checked? One option is to cross-check them with multiple other outlets.
<b>Independence</b>	Does the outlet have a stated or known point of view? Could the outlet be influenced by any outside party perhaps for political or financial reasons? What does the 'about' section tell us about the outlet? What does an internet search tell us about the outlet?
<b>Accountability</b>	How <b>accountable</b> is the outlet? Can the media outlet or organization be held responsible for the facts it presents?

In the hurricane example, the facts used in the social media post, by the commercial radio station, and the National Weather Service are all likely to be verifiable. The independence and accountability of a social media account, however, may be hard to establish. A look at past posts can be helpful. You might also question the independence and accountability of the commercial radio station, although simply being commercially funded does not inevitably mean the station will be influenced by financial backers. The National Weather service is likely to have the most evidence to support its independence and accountability. A look in the 'about' section of a website could offer vital information.

Using News Outlets Responsibly: The Do's and Dont's	
DO	DON'T
<p><b>DO</b> a cross-check. Compare an alternate outlet or two to your chosen outlet.</p> <p><b>DO</b> look for a variety of outlets—official and unofficial, private and public, factual and opinionated.</p> <p><b>DO</b> look for an <b>agenda</b>, the hidden reason that an outlet would be less than impartial.</p> <p><b>DO</b> use trusted news outlets with stories that cite solid outlets, like universities and respected experts.</p>	<p><b>DON'T</b> automatically trust outlets sponsored or supported by outside parties that may have an agenda.</p> <p><b>DON'T</b> over-rely on social media. While some social media posts may be accurate, others may simply repeat distortions that are circulating on internet, print, radio, and television news outlets.</p> <p><b>DON'T</b> share and spread unverified "facts" from unaccountable outlets.</p>

**Content Filters:** Once you identify a credible outlet, you can develop a content filter that helps you curate the information in your news neighborhood. In the example above, the National Weather Service (NWS) report stands the best chance of being credible. It comes from a long trusted scientific body with no reason to spin or slant the facts. With the NWS as a content filter, you can use it to evaluate other outlets you can trust. The next time you hear a weather report, you might check it against the NWS—which would be your content filter.

## Evaluating Credibility of News Outlets

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**Directions:** Choose a news topic that interests you. Search the internet for news stories on the topic. Then compare them to practice curating a “news neighborhood.” (Look at the sample to help you complete the table.)

**SAMPLE (NOTE: The entries are fictional.)**

Curate Your Own News Scoring 1-5 (5 being most credible)						
TOPIC: Self-driving Cars						
Outlet (platform)	Story Title or Subject	Type of Information	Verification	Independence	Accountability	Credibility Rating
<i>Grey Automation (online magazine)</i>	<i>“Tesla Tests Upgrade to Self-Driving Car”</i>	<i>News report; commentary</i>	<i>CTV reports same facts; commentary far more negative than CNN’s</i>	<i>Receives support from three car-making companies; not independent</i>	<i>Not fully known; some reader comments suggest suspicion and disagreement</i>	<i>3</i>

## Evaluating Credibility of News Outlets

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<b>Curate Your Own News</b> Scoring 1-5 (5 being most credible)						
TOPIC: _____						
<b>Outlet (platform)</b>	<b>Story Title or Subject</b>	<b>Type of Information</b>	<b>Verification</b>	<b>Independence</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Credibility Rating</b>

1. Which of the following best describes facts you can trust?

- a. come from a news blog by a writer whose name appears in a byline
- b. come from an independent outlet that is accountable and can be verified
- c. come with opinionated and interesting commentary
- d. come from a single outlet that cannot be checked

2. Suppose you read a news story about a drug that can increase muscle tone while reducing body fat—without changing your diet. Which of the following would most likely hold a hidden agenda?

- a. A doctor who is an expert in the field explains the benefits and risks of the medicine.
- b. A scientist interviewed about the test trials works for the company that made the drug.
- c. The story appears in a reputable health magazine that includes advertisements.
- d. People who used the drug provide positive feedback and limited side effects.

3. Briefly explain how your content filter works to provide you with credible news outlets.

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4. Suppose key information for an essay you are writing is verified by four outlets but a fifth outlet indicates that the information is false. Will you include the information from the fifth outlet in your essay? Explain.

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5. Rank the following information items for their likely credibility. Explain your reasoning.

Information Item	Rank	Reasoning
Magazine article written by a scientist		
Video by a person with over 1 million social media likes		
Data provided by a government agency		
Data provided by a multinational company		
TV commercial that features celebrity testimonials		
Editorial in a national newspaper		

6. **REFLECT** In the fairly recent past, most people received their news from local newspapers and one of a few television networks. How has today's news environment changed? Do you think the changes are an improvement? Use examples to support your opinion.

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## Answer key

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1. Which of the following best describes facts you can trust?

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- c. come with opinionated and interesting commentary
- d. come from a single outlet that cannot be checked

2. Suppose you read a news story about a drug that can increase muscle tone while reducing body fat—without changing your diet. Which of the following would most likely hold a hidden agenda?

- a. A doctor who is an expert in the field explains the benefits and risks of the medicine.
- b. A scientist interviewed about the test trials works for the company that made the drug.**
- c. The story appears in a reputable health magazine that includes advertisements.
- d. People who used the drug provide positive feedback and limited side effects.

3. Briefly explain how your content filter works to provide you with credible news outlets.

**Possible response: I can use my content filter to verify facts that a news outlet states. I can check whether the outlet is independent and accountable. If I find that the outlet is credible, it can be in my neighborhood. I can also use it to check stories from outlets not in my news neighborhood.**

4. Suppose key information for an essay you are writing is verified by four outlets but a fifth outlet indicates that the information is false. Will you include the information from the fifth outlet in your essay? Explain.

**Answers will vary.**

5. Rank the following information items for their likely credibility. Explain your reasoning.

Information Item	Rank	Reasoning
Magazine article written by a scientist	2	<b>Scientists are usually truthful and rigorous.</b>
Video by a person with over 1 million social media likes	5	<b>Social media likes are no proof of credibility.</b>
Data provided by a government agency	1	<b>Most agencies that conduct scientific research have reliable information.</b>
Data provided by a multinational company	4	<b>Companies that promote untruths receive pushback.</b>
TV commercial that features celebrity testimonials	6	<b>Commercials are unlikely to provide the whole truth.</b>
Editorial in a national newspaper	3	<b>Op-eds are checked for accuracy.</b>

**6. REFLECT** In the fairly recent past, most people received their news from local newspapers and one of a few television networks. How has today's news environment changed? Do you think the changes are an improvement? Use examples to support your opinion.

**Answers will vary. Accept all reasonable responses that provide supporting reasons.**