
MY WORLD LESSON #8

Should I Share It?

Overview

Students investigate the questions they could ask before sharing news on social media. They read and discuss an article called “Should I Share It?” and are introduced to the issues by the BBC *My World* video, “What About Social Media?” The video explores the role of social media in spreading accurate news and inaccurate news and rumors. Students explore the roles of different types of news available through social media and use a decision flowchart to help evaluate whether a news story is “shareworthy.”

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

Class time: 45-60 minutes

Student handouts: “Should I Share It?” Informational article, Guided Practice, Share It or NOT? Flowchart, Check Your Social Media Savvy Assessment.

Materials: Computer or tablet with internet connection.

Class structure and pacing

1. 5 minutes Class warm-up discussion
2. 10 minutes Informational article: “Should I Share It?”
3. 5 minutes Follow-up discussion
4. 10 minutes *My World* video: “What About Social Media?”
5. 5 minutes Whole-class discussion of focus questions
6. 10 minutes Guided Practice
7. 10 minutes Media Literacy Assessment

Procedure

1. If students are under 13, point out that social media platforms do not allow them to register for an account, but this lesson will help prepare them for when they have an account in the future. In the meantime, this lesson will help them understand and evaluate references to social media posts that they may encounter in news media reports.

■ **Pose these questions, asking for a show of hands:**

- What is social media? Can you name any social media?
- (If 13+) Do you use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, or others?
- Have you ever seen a piece of news, information or post on social media that looked accurate but turned out to be false? Ask for examples, but students should not share names.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Understand and appreciate the responsibility to evaluate news before they share it.

Identify and find examples of irresponsible use of social media.

Apply the concepts of verification, independence, and reliability to vet various news sources.

Compile an ongoing list of reliable and unreliable news outlets.

LESSON VOCABULARY

digital-savvy *adj.* familiar with social media and how to use it

fake news *n.* an informal term commonly understood to describe news and information that has been deliberately made up for political or commercial purposes or a deliberate distribution of misinformation that imitates real news

misleading *adj.* giving a wrong or false impression

politically-motivated *adj.* taking action for political gain

production values *n.* the combined technical qualities and richness of a presentation or product

sponsored article *n.* editorial content paid for by a company for the purpose of promoting a product

- Do you think false social media stories affect the people who are subjects of the stories?
- Do you think the stories have an impact on the people who share them?

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

- Understand the importance of distinguishing real news from “fake news” (media posts that are made to look like news but have another purpose such as to sell a product or influence opinions) on social media.
- Realize that sharing false information spreads ideas that can distort our understanding or be harmful.
- Identify examples of irresponsible uses of social media by consumers and producers.
- Learn strategies to recognize news that can be shared responsibly.

2. Distribute the article “Should I Share It?” Read the article as a class, or have students break into pairs to read together.

3. After reading the article, prompt a brief discussion with students:

- Do you think you could recognize fake news? How?
- What makes you want to share a post?

4. Present the *My World* video segment, “What About Social Media?” to introduce students to a process that can be used to decide whether a “news” item is shareworthy.

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

Ask students to consider these things and take notes on them as they watch the video.

- How can posts on social media appear to be intentionally misleading?
- What are the possible outcomes of sharing false or misleading information?
- How can young people tell whether social media content is biased, misleading, or false? (Review the meanings of biased, misleading, and false with students.)

■ **Ask students to share their observations and discuss the question, “What do you think makes something shareworthy?”**

5. Review what students have learned and provide a chance to express their views about sharing on social media. Ask students:

- (If 13+) What do you share on social media now?
- How might you consider your choices about what to share in the future?

 **TIPS FROM**

 **Microsoft Education**

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

Utilize Flipgrid with this Lesson

After reviewing the video and article give students a chance to express their views about sharing on social media by posting focus questions in Flipgrid either individually or in pairs. Continue the conversation on [Flipgrid!](#)

Facilitate collaborative learning

Post the guided practice into OneNote Class Notebook and start a decision tree for a ‘share or not’ flow chart that students can complete in small groups as homework. Students can express their answers with inking, stickers, emojis or audio commentary as they apply their learning. Free education collaboration tools are at your fingertips with [Office 365](#).

6. Provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned about whether to share specific news on social media through Guided Practice.

- **Direct students to complete the Guided Practice handout in accordance with what they have learned from the lesson.**
- **If time allows, have students use the Share It or NOT? flowchart to identify articles, videos, or memes online that you might want to think twice about sharing.**

7. Assess what students have learned and provide them a chance to share their reflections on how they might now use social media.

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

Extend and connect

ELEMENTARY/PRIMARY

(ages 6–10)

Explain that social media sites allow people to share personal information and helpful articles, but they also allow people to share false information that can hurt other people. Create a T-chart with the labels SHARE and DON'T SHARE on the board. Under SHARE, write "Cat pictures." Ask for other ideas about what's ok to share. Under DON'T SHARE, write "Secrets." Ask for other ideas about what's not ok to share. Discuss the reasons for the choices.

HIGH SCHOOL/SECONDARY

(ages 15–18)

Ask students to conduct online research to learn more about how social media is used to spread conspiracy theories and disinformation. Ask students to find examples of false memes, misleading sponsored articles, and falsified images. Examine some of the techniques used to engage social media users (clickbait, emotional appeals, scare tactics, etc.).

EDUCATION STANDARDS

Media Literacy

ISTE 2a Students cultivate and manage their digital identity and reputation and are aware of the permanence of their actions in the digital world.

ISTE 2b Students engage in positive, safe, legal and ethical behavior when using technology, including social interactions online or when using networked devices.

ISTE 3b Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.

CCSS English and Language Arts Reading Information

RI.6.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

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.7.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

RI.7.5 Analyze the use of text features (e.g., graphics, headers, captions) in public documents.

RI.8.7 Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

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.

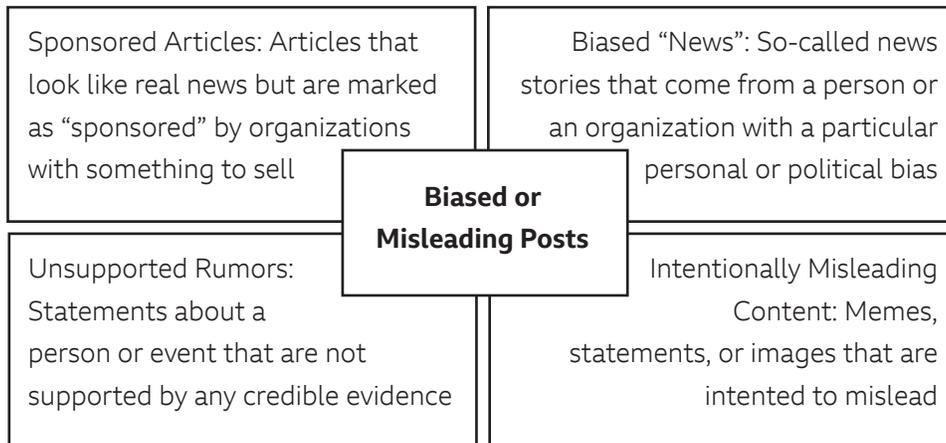
Should I Share It?

Do you think you can tell the difference between fact and fiction in posts and comments on social media? A Stanford University study shows that even **digital-savvy** students can be fooled by the information on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Social Media Scams

The Stanford Study looked at U.S. middle school, high school, and college students. Researchers asked students to distinguish between ads, sponsored content, news stories, and **politically-motivated** messaging. One test of 203 middle school students revealed that 80 percent believed that a **sponsored article** was actually news. A majority of students also viewed rumors, memes, and misleading images (manipulated by software or moved from a different context) as credible news content. The chart below defines these kinds of misleading content.

CONTENT OFTEN MISTAKEN FOR CREDIBLE NEWS



Adults are fooled by misleading posts, too. Studies at NYU and Princeton have revealed how age determines people’s ability to evaluate the nature and credibility of social media posts. Look at the table on the next page.

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Who gets fooled? Trends across age groups (In the U.S.)	
Age Group	Trend
1 18-29	More likely than Groups 2 and 3 to be fooled by visual content with high production values .
2 29-50	Less likely to be fooled by visual content than Group 1 and by text posts than Groups 4 and 5.
3 50-65	More likely than Group 1 to be fooled by text posts.
4 65+	Twice as likely to be fooled by text posts than Group 2 and seven times more likely than Group 1.

The Stanford study corroborates the Princeton and NYU research. It concluded that younger people respond strongly to visual messages, sometimes mistaking content with high production values for credibility. It also determined that older adults tend to believe almost all information communicated in written words.

What to Share?

A survey by the Pew Research Center found that 88 percent of people ages 16–29 use social media applications daily. Over 60 percent of this group use the applications “several times” each day, receiving “10–15 messages,” or posts. While many of these messages are legitimate or entertainment-based, others are false news items, rumors, and misleading memes.

Anyone can be fooled. But we can all be cautious about sharing information that falls in the categories of these hypothetical examples:

- Conveniently agrees with your point of view (5 Reasons Why Your Political Ideas Are Correct)
- Offers to solve a common problem or provide a desired outcome (10 Miracle Diets That Really Work)
- Seems likely to interest a group of friends (Janey got caught shoplifting at the local grocery store.)
- Makes bold claims and supports suspicions or prejudices (Study reveals that a majority of immigrants reject our cultural traditions.)

Before sharing, we could all take a moment to ask ourselves crucial questions:

- Is this information likely to hurt anyone if I share it? For example, am I sharing private information or potentially damaging someone’s reputation?
- Who created this item? Is the information coming from a reputable source such as a well-established news outlet, well-regarded non-profit, or established scientific source? Or is it coming from an advertisement, an acquaintance, or an unfamiliar source you haven’t evaluated?
- Why has this been sent to me? Information from marketing campaigns, political action groups, or organizations or individuals seeking clicks or likes is usually not considered impartial.
- Does this item use highly-charged words, such as “amazing” “or “catastrophic,” ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, or extra exclamation points that exaggerate the scale of the content? Legitimate news outlets avoid that type of language unless an event calls for it.

There's nothing wrong with posting a cute photo of your cat or cheering for your home team on social media. But when sharing content from an outside source, think before you send. When it comes to the spread of misinformation, we all can strive to be part of the solution rather than the problem.

Sources:

<https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:fv751yt5934/SHEG%20Evaluating%20Information%20Online.pdf>

<https://ed.stanford.edu/news/stanford-researchers-find-students-have-trouble-judging-credibility-information-online>

https://enough.org/stats_cyberbullying

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/biases-make-people-vulnerable-to-misinformation-spread-by-social-media/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/jan/10/older-people-more-likely-to-share-fake-news-on-facebook>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/10/us/politics/facebook-fake-news-2016-election.html>

Directions: Use the **Share It or Not? Flowchart** to decide whether to share each of the following items you might discover in your social media feed.

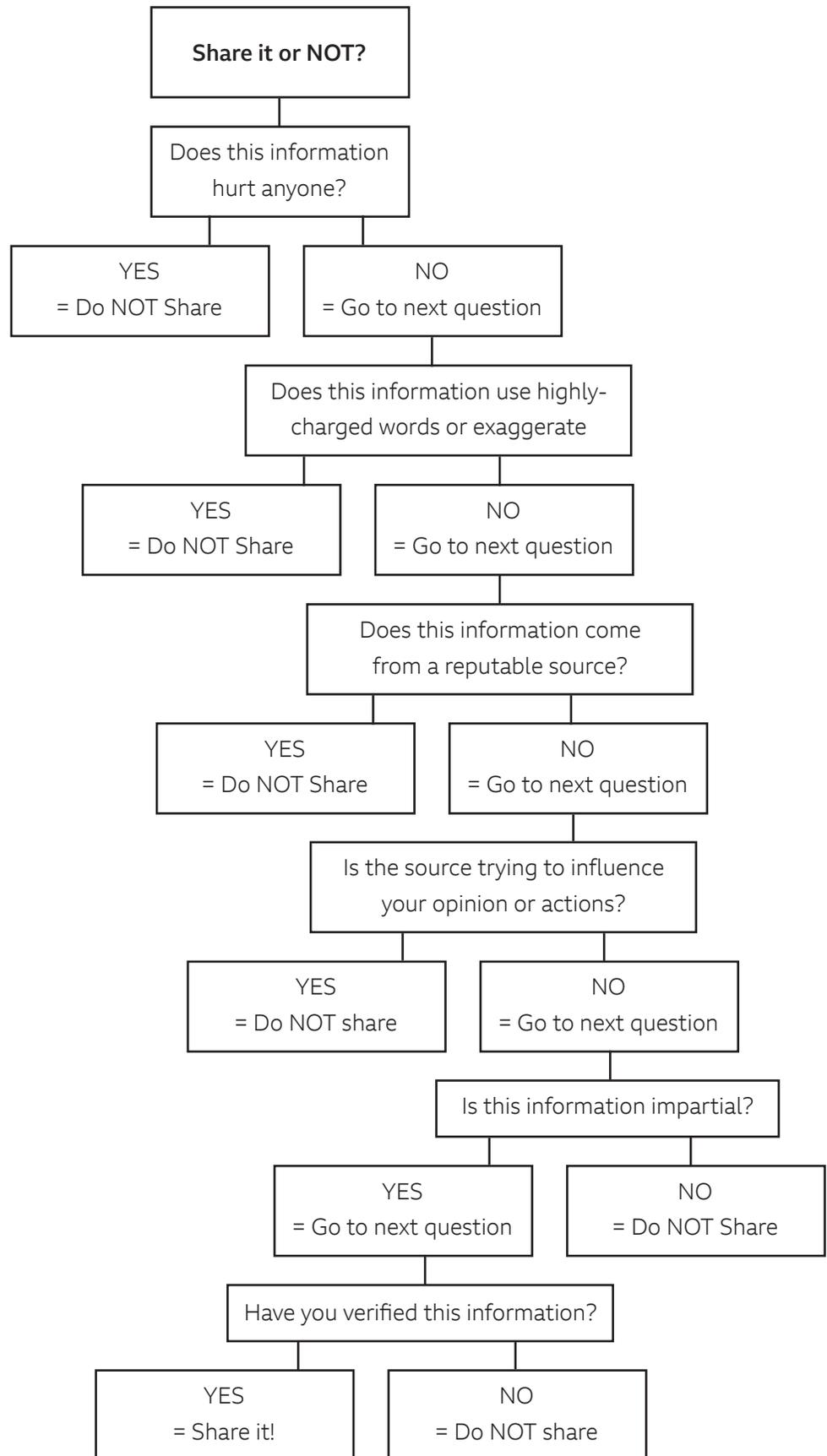
Item	Source	Share? Y/N	Reasons for Your Decision
A link to the school's website where she found information about this weekend's football game	School friend		
An article about a pop singer's "amazing weight loss"	Sponsored article		
A video about how your family should buy solar cells to power your home	Solar Energy Inc.		
An article about how a politician broke the law	The New York Times		
A meme about how fat a movie star has become	No known source		
Information about how a classmate cheated on a test	A friend of a friend		

Answer key

Directions: Use the **Share It or Not? Flowchart** to decide whether to share each of the following items you might discover in your social media feed.

Item	Source	Share? Y/N	Reasons for Your Decision
A link to the school's website where she found information about this weekend's football game	School friend		<i>The school website is an impartial source of information.</i>
An article about a pop singer's "amazing weight loss"	Sponsored article		<i>A sponsored article is an ad, and language like "amazing" is emotionally charged.</i>
A video about how your family should buy solar cells to power your home	Solar Energy Inc.		<i>Advertising content is often biased, and Solar Energy Inc. obviously wants to sell your solar panels.</i>
An article about how a politician broke the law	The New York Times		<i>The New York Times is a credible news source.</i>
A meme about how fat a movie star has become	No known source		<i>The source is unknown, and the content is harming the person in question.</i>
Information about how a classmate cheated on a test	A friend of a friend		<i>The source isn't verified, and the content is harming the person in question.</i>

Directions: A flowchart can help you decide whether to share online posts. Answer the questions in the **Share It or Not? Flowchart** to evaluate if you would share information on social media or write your own questions to use when evaluating information from social media.



1. Which group of people is most impressed by high-quality graphics on social media?

- a. young people
- b. teachers
- c. older adults
- d. news writers

2. Which of the following is likely to offer accurate information?

- a. a sponsored article
- b. a video about an amazing new product
- c. an article from a major news outlet
- d. a meme from a school friend

3. List three questions to ask before sharing information on social media.

4. Name three issues that should stop a person from sharing information on social media.

5. For each item below, choose a course of action by circling Share or Don't Share. Then explain the reason for your choice.

Share / Don't Share "Community Update on New Park" article from local newspaper

WHY? _____

Share / Don't Share "Pop Star Adores This Fabulous Hair Product" sponsored content from website

WHY? _____

Share / Don't Share "Avoid This Food at All Costs" article by a health food company

WHY? _____

Share / Don't Share "New Medication Reduces Cancer Risk" video from the National Institutes of Health

WHY? _____

6. Give three reasons why someone might inappropriately share information.

7. REFLECT Think about how social media should be used. Based on what you've learned about sharing on social media, how might you think about your choices about what you share in the future? Write a paragraph explaining your thoughts. Include possible examples.

Answer key

1. Which group of people is most impressed by high-quality graphics on social media?

- a. young people
- b. teachers
- c. older adults
- d. news writers

2. Which of the following is likely to offer accurate information?

- a. a sponsored article
- b. a video about an amazing new product
- c. an article from a major news outlet
- d. a meme from a school friend

3. List three questions to ask before sharing information on social media.

Possible response: Will it harm someone? Is the source biased? What is the purpose of this information?

4. Name three issues that should stop a person from sharing information on social media.

Possible response: the source is not reputable; the information is an ad; the content is emotionally charged.

5. For each item below, choose a course of action by circling Share or Don't Share. Then explain the reason for your choice. **Answers will vary. Accept reasonable responses.**

Share / Don't Share "Community Update on New Park" article from local newspaper

WHY? _____

Share / Don't Share "Pop Star Adores This Fabulous Hair Product" sponsored content from website

WHY? _____

Share / Don't Share "Avoid This Food at All Costs" article by a health food company

WHY? _____

Share / Don't Share "New Medication Reduces Cancer Risk" video from the National Institutes of Health

WHY? _____

6. Give three reasons why someone might inappropriately share information.

Possible response: They agree with it. They didn't check it out. They want to hurt someone.

7. REFLECT Think about how social media should be used. Based on what you've learned about sharing on social media, how might you think about your choices about what you share in the future? Write a paragraph explaining your thoughts. Include possible examples. **Answers will vary. Accept reasonable responses.**