

Around the world, people have access to information more than ever before—online and on social media, as well as on traditional media such as radio, newspaper and television. It's important for everyone to think critically and know how to make sense of all this information so that we can be sure we are accessing accurate information, and avoid mistakenly sharing misinformation or false news.

What is media literacy?

A media literate person can 'read' all types of media—including television and radio, newspapers, and information on the internet. They are able to understand, analyse and critically think about the information they receive.

To become media literate, it's important to think critically about what the information is, where it came from, and why it was made.

How to spot false information

False information can lead to harm. It may be something you read, hear, or may even shared by someone close to you, like a friend or family member. Examples include miracle cures for illnesses or medical conditions, or highly emotional stories intended to create fear, anger, or sympathy.

It's important to learn how to spot false information and how to tell the difference between a fact, someone's opinion, or something that is actually untrue. You can do this by following these four steps:

1. Get the **whole story**. Don't automatically believe everything that you see or hear.
2. Check the **source** - who created the information or content and do they have a reputation for accuracy? What is their motivation? Where are they located?
3. Check for **evidence** that the information is accurate and credible. Be wary if you see images, numbers, quotes or dates that don't have sources, look out of date or lack context.
4. Get the **full context** - look for other reports or information from credible sources to verify if the information is correct.

If you see or hear false information

1. Don't share it.
2. If you posted it, take it down or remove it.
3. If it was shared by a friend or family member, you can gently and respectfully let them know, for example, by sending them a private message.

Everyone has a part to play in helping to prevent the spread of false information. Always think before you share.

For more information, see Netsafe New Zealand's fact sheet on ['How to spot fake news'](#).

