

Free Press 101: Middle Years:

## ENSURING ACCURACY IN REPORTING

---

The following learning experiences will help students understand the role of accuracy in storytelling and reporting by focusing on examining and verifying sources.

### GOALS OF THESE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

---

Learners will actively demonstrate understanding of journalistic accuracy including:

- Understanding that not all information sources are truthful, and why.
- When, how and why to question information.
- The importance of balancing perspectives in journalism.

### DEFINITIONS

---

**Fact:** A thing that is known and proven to be true.

**Verify:** To make sure something is true or accurate.

**Source:** Something or someone that provides information.

**Believability:** How likely something or someone is to be accurate and true.

**Balance:** Ensuring an issue is discussed from different perspectives to give a clear understanding.

### DEEPER LEARNING: Fact-checking influencers and rumours

---

The skills developed here can be applied to help students examine their sources for information in their lives more generally.

- Ask students about information or rumours they've heard. Conduct the "truth sleuth" discussion to help them understand the believability of their sources. These sources might be things they've heard from adults, YouTube videos, online gaming, or anywhere else.
- Ask students to share their favourite influencers or channels. Conduct the "truth sleuth" discussion to assess the believability of the content and verify the information created by the influencer or channel.
- Encourage students to question and wonder about information they encounter, even without someone to discuss with.
- Challenge students to find various media with opposing viewpoints of the same issue, helping them recognize that multiple viewpoints exist outside of their experience.
- Choose a current topic for students to be "for" or "against". For ideas from within your school subject, check out news stories on the [Search News by Subject](#) page. Challenge students to assess balance within the article, and stage a debate to challenge their understanding of the topic, their subject material, and the concept of balance in reporting.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 1: FACT OR FICTION

1.
  - Explain to students that people often must decide who is telling the truth and when to find out more.
  - Introduce the word "fact" to the learners: something that is known and can be proven.
  - Read each of the classmate examples below to the learners and ask them if they believe the statement could be true, and why. They should be able to provide reasons to doubt these statements, demonstrating ways they could verify the source.
    1. Jordan tells people he's banned from an online game because he was ranked in the top 1% and the company thought his account was a bot.
    2. Ryan says he knows eight different languages but is too shy to demonstrate any of them.
    3. Aaliyah says her science project isn't finished because it was so powerful the government came to her house and destroyed it.
    4. Maya says her mom was once a famous movie star, but all the films were destroyed.
  - Ask the learners: Why are some reasons people don't speak the truth? (on purpose or accidentally)
  - Explain to learners that sometimes there are things that should be believed on apps, TV or on websites, and it's important to learn some skills for figuring out how to decide if someone or something should be believed.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 2: TRUTH SLEUTHS

2.
  - Using the **PowerPoint presentation here**, (pdf version **here**) ask learners to assess whether different sources are believable or not by asking
    1. Who is telling us this information?
    2. What do we know (or assume) about them?
    3. How could we find out more? What questions do we need to ask or things we need to see before we believe?
    4. How does this all affect whether we should believe this source or not?
  - For each slide, ask the students to decide whether the source is believable, not believable, or if they're unsure, by going through steps 1-4 directly above.
  - At the end of the slide show, have the students speculate on what most likely happened, based on their sources and discussion.
  - Reveal the true story by sharing **the article** with the students.
  - Explore applying these skills more broadly by using some of the "Deeper Learning" activities on the previous page.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 3: EXAMINING BALANCE

3.
  - Divide the class into two groups, and explain that each group will either be "for" or "against" the following statement:

***"Snakes make great pets"***
  - Read the two articles to the students and ask them to stand briefly (or raise hands) when they hear something in the article that supports their position.
  - Based on how many times each group stood up during the reading of the articles, ask them to assess whether this issue is balanced in the reporting.