

LESSON 2

Research Without Getting Tricked: Sources, Scams & AI in 2026

60 minutes

Digital Foundations

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Learn to spot trustworthy sources, verify facts against independent sources, and use AI safely for research. Build a Research Page with 5 verified facts for your Something Real project.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Apply the CRAAP test to evaluate source trustworthiness
- Verify factual claims against independent sources
- Identify where AI assistants help and where they can provide false information
- Recognise phishing patterns and understand two-factor authentication
- Distinguish between using AI as a learning support and using it dishonestly

BEFORE THE BELL

- Ensure students have access to their portfolio accounts and can create a new page.
- Students need browser access for the verification steps later in the lesson.
- Students need a scrap of paper or a sticky note for their ranking.
- Before the lesson: (1) confirm which AI assistant your school permits students to use (Copilot in Microsoft 365, Gemini in Google Workspace, ChatGPT or Claude if allowed), and (2) write the exact URL on the whiteboard or share it in the class chat so students are not guessing. In the lesson, students need browser access and sign-in to their school cloud storage. The verification process is identical across AI tools.
- Remind students that the AI-verified entry needs both versions recorded, not just the final one.

Research Without Getting Tricked: Sources, Scams & AI in 2026

HOW THE LESSON RUNS

5 min	introduction	Introduction
4 min	content	Key Concepts
8 min	activity	Flip Your Instinct
15 min	activity	Step-by-step: Verify a Claim and Check an AI Answer
3 min	content	Common Issues
3 min	content	Digital Safety Aside: Phishing and 2FA
15 min	activity	Portfolio Build: Your Research Page
4 min	content	Reflection
3 min	summary	Lesson Summary

TEACHING MOVES

- During Flip Your Instinct, do a hands-up vote before revealing verifications so students see the gap between instinct and fact. Make the discussion about why gut feel failed, not about right answers.
- When demonstrating the verification process, model searching aloud: show the exact keywords you use, pause when a source looks promising, and explain why you chose a second source. Students need to see the thinking, not just the result.
- After the AI check in step 4, put one student's AI answer and the official Irish source side by side on the board. Point out the tone difference: confidence without evidence is a red flag.
- During portfolio build, circulate and push back on vague trust justifications ('it's official' or 'Google found it'). The Why I Trust This line must name what was verified (author, date, official body, cross-check result).

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students assume a specialist's personal blog is more trustworthy than a government source because it sounds detailed. Remind them that detail does not equal accuracy: check who runs it and when it was last updated.
- AI hallucinations are written with confidence. Students treat a plausible-sounding answer as true without checking. Push them to test every AI claim against an official Irish source before using it.
- Students write 'Why I trust this' as a general statement rather than naming what they verified. Ask them to complete the sentence: 'I checked [specific thing] and found that [specific result].'

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: The two sample entries every student types in step 4 show the layout (Claim, Source, Why I trust this), so a student who is unsure can copy their shape for their own. During portfolio build, pair struggling students with a peer to share search strategies.
- Support: For students who struggle to find a second independent source, suggest official Irish bodies (Health Service Executive, Department of Enterprise, Revenue, An Post) relevant to their Something Real topic before they start searching.
- Extension: Challenge students to find one fact where two sources disagree and use a third source to determine which is correct. Record both findings and the resolution in their Research Page.