

LESSON 12

Reliable or not: comparing sources

40 minutes

Evaluating Online Content

Outcome 2.4

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Learn to evaluate online sources using four questions on who created them, their accuracy, currency and verifiability. Practise on class examples then apply the questions to two sources on your own topic to decide which to trust.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
2.4	compare information on a specific topic of interest from various sources in order to evaluate its reliability, validity, accuracy, and timeliness

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Compare information on a topic from various sources to evaluate its reliability, validity, accuracy and timeliness (LO 2.4)
- Apply four questions when judging a source: who made it and why, is it accurate, is it current, can it be verified elsewhere
- Commit to a trust verdict on each source and decide which of two sources on your own topic you trust more, and why

BEFORE THE BELL

- Class Play needs a device each and students signed in. Start it from the step on the board; the join code appears on screen for them to type in.
- Write the four questions and three verdicts on the board.
- Teacher device and board for the interactive activity
- A device each, students signed in; the board shows the join code
- Student devices with browser access; fallback source cards ready to project

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

4 min	introduction	Start
5 min	content	Examine and discuss
4 min	activity	Hands-on: source showdown
10 min	activity	Class poll: what is your call?
12 min	activity	Your turn
4 min	content	Make sense
1 min	summary	What you covered

ANSWERS AND LOOK-FORS

- Source A, Trust it You can see who made it, when, and on what basis. The sample and method are stated, funding is named, and there is a path to the full study. Trust here does not mean the study settles every school forever; it means this source is solid enough to rely on as one careful piece of evidence.
- Source B, Do not rely on it No author, no date, no study, a suspiciously neat claim, and pressure to share fast. Any one of those is a warning; together they are a classic unreliable post. Do not use this as evidence for anything.
- Source C, Check it further It is recent and on-topic, but the purpose is to sell furniture, the author is a marketing team, and the key number has no trail you can follow. That does not prove the claim is false. It means you should not rely on this page alone. Find the original studies, or a careful independent summary, before you use the figure.
- Source D, Check it further The author is named and the tone is careful, so it is not junk. Timeliness is the issue. Education research and school practice move on, and the piece itself admits the evidence was early. Use it as background if you like, but pair it with something current before you lean on its conclusions.

TEACHING MOVES

- Keep Examine and discuss to the four questions and three verdicts only, then move straight into Source A.
- Run the source showdown teacher-led. Take three full verdict-and-reveals (A, B, and either C or D) and give the fourth source as a short read-aloud of content and verdict only.
- After the first reveal, stress that reliability is not about whether you like the answer.
- During Your turn, stop the searching at three minutes and project both fallback source cards for anyone without two sources, so that the remaining time goes on the four questions rather than the hunt.
- If the hands-on runs long, drop one reveal rather than cutting Make sense or the recap, because those closing minutes are where the four questions get named as a habit the class can reuse.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students judge sources by appearance instead of the questions. Remind them to start with who made it and why.
- Students choose two similar sources for their topic. Encourage finding sources of different kinds.
- Students hesitate to commit to a verdict. Reassure them that check it further is a valid response.
- Students write long paragraphs instead of short notes. Point them at the worked micro-example in Your turn.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: Offer a printed template listing the four questions for the Your turn activity.
- Support: Use the fallback source cards in Your turn so that students who cannot find sources still get the full annotation time.
- Extension: Challenge students to fully annotate both sources, or add a third and rank all three.
- Support: Allow pairs to share a device if individual access is limited.