What are information zones?

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Evaluating Information

An essential 21st century skill is learning how to distinguish information that is reliable from disinformation, misinformation and fake news. Information literacy requires an understanding of the media landscape and knowledge about how to use our critical thinking skills in this landscape.

If we understand a little about the purposes of different forms of information, it helps us analyze and evaluate the media we are consuming and interacting with.

Information Zones

Information can be categorized into one of six "zones": news, opinion, entertainment, advertising, propaganda or raw information.

Each category has a primary purpose: to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to sell, to provoke or to document.

If we confuse the categories, we can ascribe incorrect purposes to the information we access.

Information Zones

Propaganda is information that provokes you - often by using false or distorted information to manipulate your emotions.

Raw information is information that is unprocessed, meaning that it has not been analyzed, checked, edited, explained or placed in any context.

Opinion is information that persuades you, ideally through the use of fact-based evidence, to adopt a specific point of view about an issue or event.

Advertising is information that is designed to sell a product or service.

Entertainment is information that is created to amuse, please, relax or distract people.

News is information that informs you, through objective reporting, about local, national and international events, issues and people of significance or of interest.

Infographic

This infographic comes from the News Literacy Project and corresponds to a News Literacy Project Checkology Lesson.

News Literacy Project and Checkology

The News Literacy Project is a website designed to help teachers make sure that students are skilled in news literacy and develop the knowledge and ability to participate in their communities as well-informed, critical thinkers.

Checkology is a virtual classroom from the News Literacy Project.

Many of the lessons on this site are presented by working journalists.

NLP Curriculum Framework

Teachers can access the News Literacy Project curriculum framework here: [Standards For Teaching News Literacy](#).

The language in this document may help you articulate outcomes in a way that is aligned with the curriculum and standards you are using in your program.

News Literacy Project Resource Library

The News Literacy Project [resource library](#)
has lessons that include

- a lesson plan

- usually a slide deck

- a combination of quizzes, worksheets, infographics and/or handouts

- a list of related resources

- and sometimes a link to the *Checkology version of the lesson

*Anyone can access the NLP instructional materials from the website. To access the Checkology lessons, you need to register as an educator.

Adaptations:

- K-12 (In the material I have looked at, this seems to be a minor issue.)

- US content (Some of the lessons focus on issues or examples that are specific to the US and may not work well in a Canadian classroom.)

Checology Instructional Supports

Each Checology lesson comes with instructional supports:

- Lesson Guide

- Related resources

- Transcript

- Answer Keys

- Posters

- Related assignments – the extended practice exercises and challenges

- Related educator resources – lesson plans, slide decks and worksheets from the News Literacy Project resource library

Accessing the Lessons and Activities

All the News Literacy Project educator resources are openly available to anyone. Go to the News Literacy Project, click on the **For Educators** tab and choose Resource Library to explore.

To use the Checkology part of this website, you will eventually need to create an Educator account and set up a classroom. To set up an educator account, you need to choose a school. You can apply to make your program a school, or you can use AlphaPlus as your school.

For this exploration, you can sign up as a student to see this specific collection of lessons and exercises.

Try out the Checkology lessons and exercises

"The foundational concepts of InfoZones help guide students to the vital realization that not all information is created equal and that the credibility of different types of information is often correlated with their purpose. By helping students discover six primary purposes of information, you can help them develop the habit of questioning the purpose of all the information they encounter.

Of course, most pieces of information have more than one purpose — a television show that is produced to be entertaining can also be informative, for example, or an advertisement produced to sell a product or service can also entertain — but this lesson helps students understand that almost all the information they encounter has one primary purpose that has a significant effect on its credibility."

How to get to the lessons

1. Go to checkology.org.

2. Click Register with class code.

3. Use the code
    BYE-BRIEF-ANIMAL.

4. Set up your student account. You are required to add a name and a password. You can optionally add an email address.

5. Put the number of the activity you choose in the chat.

Note: Teachers can reset the passwords once the students have been added to the class.

Explore

If you are an information literacy virtuoso, try 1, 2 or 3.
If you would prefer to review the lesson before you test yourself, try 4.

1 Wizard ad-spotters,

try the News or AD Challenge.

2 Facts and opinions afficionados,

try the News or Opinion Challenge.

3 Complete InfoZone nerds,

try the InfoZones Exercise: Teachers Edition.

4 Big picture first people,

try the InfoZones Lesson.

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Tips

- If you are using an ad blocker or privacy extensions, some of the options in the challenges may not show up. Try turning off the extensions or using a different browser.

- If you choose the lesson, click on the circles below the lesson to skip forward past the "pre-test" to get to the content that starts at page 8.

- If you are ready to answer a challenge question before a video is finished, the Next button might not show up until the video is finished. You can drag the video place marker to the end to speed things up.

- The lesson is mostly videos and close captioning is available. You can find a transcript by looking under the Resources tab: InfoZones lesson transcript.

- In the challenges and exercises, some videos do not have close captions and there are no transcripts available.

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Facilitating Checkology Lessons

The reading levels in some of the Checkology lessons are quite high. The teachers who reviewed the lessons felt that some learners might find it difficult to answer the questions individually. We explored the idea of working through the material in a facilitated way with groups of learners or individual learners. See an example of a lesson we tried in Information Literacy: How can I build a curriculum to help learners understand how journalism works?

Infozones Lesson Instructor Supports

The teacher resources for the InfoZones lesson are:

Lesson Guide

Related resources

- Transcript

- Answer Keys

- Posters

- Related assignments – the extended practice exercises and challenges

- Related educator resources – lesson plans, slide decks and worksheets

If you want to follow along on the site, you can log out of your student account and create a teacher account. You can choose AlphaPlus as your school.

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Related Checkology curriculum resources

Branded Content

Learn the relationship among advertisers, the news media and the public to understand the rise of branded content and debate the ethical implications of new forms of marketing.

- [Lesson guide](#)

- [Branded Content Lesson](#)

- Practice and Extend
    - [Ad or Not? Level 1](#)
    - [Ad or Not? Level 2](#)
    - [Ad or Not? Level 3](#)

Understanding Bias

Understand news media bias by learning about five types of bias and five ways it can manifest itself, as well as methods for minimizing it.

- [Lesson guide](#)

- [Understanding Bias Lesson](#)

- Practice and Extend
    - [Bias Types and Forms: Level 1](#)
    - [Bias Types and Forms: Level 2](#)

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More Information Zones curriculum resources

News Literacy Project

- InfoZones Lesson - an offline lesson

CTRL-F

- Online Search - Lesson 5 Facts and Opinions

Media Smarts

- Is that a fact?

- Recognizing Emotional Appeal

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