

Help Kids Spot Fake News and Decode Media Messages

With so much media and information coming at us through the television, phones, social media, and more, it's more important than ever for kids to understand the basics of media literacy. When tweens and teens can identify different types of news and media and the methods and meanings behind them, they're on their way to being critical thinkers and smart consumers.

Check out these 5 tips

1

Encourage healthy skepticism.

Help tweens and teens analyze the messages around them -- from Instagram posts to news headlines -- and question the purpose of the words and images they see. Teach kids how to use fact-checking tools like Snopes and FactCheck.org.

2

Play “spot the ad.”

When you see advertising on TV or a billboard, ask tweens and teens to figure out what the ad is selling. Sometimes it's obvious, and sometimes it's not. Help them explore why certain pictures, sounds, and words are used to sell certain products.

3

Explore different sides of a story.

Use real-life examples to help kids understand how people can view the same situation with totally different perspectives. Sibling conflict can be a great example of how two people can have wildly different opinions about the same event. Talk through controversial subjects and take turns arguing for different sides to help kids understand various viewpoints.

4

Play “should you share?”

Talk through the kind of content you and your tween or teen pass along to friends online. What types of things do you like to share? Do you always check to make sure something is true before you share it? How do emotions factor into your decisions to share things? Have you ever shared something and later found out it wasn't true?

5

Choose a variety of sources.

Show tweens and teens how you get news and information from different places, and explain how you make your choices. Ask them where they get their information and what tools they use to decide if something is credible, trustworthy, and fair. Explore a few partisan outlets together and talk about what you both notice. Discuss bias, satire, and clickbait.

