



Teach kids to identify misinformation and hate speech

The Internet is rich in information and resources. Unfortunately, some of its content is designed to misinform or cultivate hate.

Early on, help kids develop critical-thinking skills to judge the accuracy and objectivity of online information. Teach them to distinguish fact from opinion and how to recognize bias, propaganda, and stereotyping.

### Tips to help kids learn to spot misinformation online

Teach kids to ask critical questions about information that they find online, and follow through by looking at the sources suggested below.

#### **What is the purpose of the site or story?**

To entertain? To sell? To inform?  
To promote a view or belief?

#### **Who created the site or wrote the story?**

- Does the site have an “About Us” section? Is the site sponsored by a company, organization, or an individual?
- Does the site supply information about the author? If it does, what are the author’s credentials? Is the author associated with a reputable organization?

#### **How does the information compare?**

Suggest that kids check the information they collect online against other sources. Refer them to well-known, reputable websites to verify the information. Take them to the library and check other media such as newspapers, magazines, and books.

#### **Is the information current?**

Look for a date that indicates when it was written or revised.

#### **Is the information accurate?**

- How objective is the source?  
Is a particular bias evident?
- Is the information fact or opinion? Can you find other sources that back it up?
- Is it coherent and well written?

### Tip

If you want to find out who owns a website or publishes its material, go to: <http://www.easywhois.com> for details.

## Hate on the Internet

There are many forms of hate on the Internet, ranging from racist and homophobic sites to the meanness found on some social media and websites frequented by young people.

The “purpose” of a hate site isn’t always readily apparent. For example, at first glance, martinlutherking.org appears to be a tribute to the American civil rights leader. In fact, it is a hate site created by a white supremacist organization.

White supremacists, terrorists, and other such groups target young people for recruitment through social network sites, private chat rooms, and email and text messages. They:

- Look for vulnerable youth who can be brought into their community by appealing to their need for belonging and desire to make a difference.
- Use music and slick videos to entice young people to their causes.
- Set up areas specifically designed to attract young children that give the appearance of legitimacy by offering seemingly harmless activities and crafts, as well as links to respected kids’ sites, but subtly promote hate.

## Tips to help kids avoid hateful content online

**Educate kids about online hate** to help them recognize and avoid hateful content. Teach them how to identify hateful speech, symbols, and other content on websites—for example, swastikas, derogatory references to race, religion, or sexual orientation, and mean-spirited cartoon depictions of ethnic, religious, and racial groups.

**Use kid-friendly search engines** for younger children. These are designed to shield kids from potentially harmful material.

**Investigate filtering software**, although these technologies are by no means a complete solution. Online hate often crops up in subtle forms that filters don’t always flag.

## Helpful Information

[Learn how to be a good digital citizen](#)

[Help kids stand up to online bullying](#)

The Anti-Defamation League: [Combating Hate](#)

