



Media Literacy

What is Media?

The word media is used to describe the many different ways of communicating information to people in society. Examples of media are the internet, websites, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, podcasts, music, television, the news, movies, magazines, radio, advertisements, and many more.



What is Media Literacy?

Media literacy is the ability to think about the information being presented, and decide if it is true or false. Most of what people see in the media has been designed to sell something, either a product or an idea. Media often does not reflect life in accurate ways. Some examples of things that are not accurately shown in media are the ways people's bodies look, people's relationships, sexual activities people engage in, and what people's day to day lives are like. It is important for people to have an understanding of what is real life versus what is media.



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Different Types of Media

Three types of media that many people use and view every day are movies, television, and the internet. Each of these types of media can be entertaining and educational, but they can also show things that are misleading and not true.

Movies

Different types of movies often show ideas of life, relationships, and sex that are not true in real life. Movies usually only show one kind of romantic relationship style and often show sex scenes that are not realistic to what sex is like for people in real life.



Internet

The internet includes websites, phone apps, and social media like TikTok and Instagram. The things people read on the internet may not always be true. Photos seen on Instagram can be edited; information people read on Facebook may not be accurate; and websites people visit can be unsafe.



Television

The actors on TV shows often all have the same body types. This means that people do not see the many different body types that people have in the world when they watch TV. The stories on TV shows are usually not realistic and show ideas of sex and relationships that are shown as healthy but are actually unhealthy if they happened in real life.





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Movies and Television

Movies and television often show bodies and stories about romantic relationships, friendships, and sexuality that are unrealistic (not seen in life). Movies and TV are often dramatic and can make people who are watching them compare themselves to the characters, friendships, romantic relationships, and bodies of the characters. This can make people feel self-conscious and discouraged, or that they do not fit in.



When watching movies or TV, it is important to think about who is not seen or how groups of people are not represented in movies and TV. Often, the people in movies and TV are white, straight, non-disabled and cis-gendered.

People who are often not seen in the media are or shown inaccurately in the media are:

- People with disabilities
- Women
- 2SLGBTQIA+ folks
- People of colour
- People with different body types
- Non-binary people
- People with low income



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The Internet and Social Media

On the internet, mostly on social media (like Instagram or TikTok), people often feel pressured to present their lives or bodies in ways that fit social ideas about how people should act and how their bodies should look.

People use photoshop and filters to edit their pictures to match unrealistic beauty standards, and only post pictures where they are doing fun things that make them happy or proud. This can make someone feel like other people's lives are better than theirs and can lead to unhealthy self image.



It is important to be aware of the difference between what is false and what is true online and for people to not compare themselves with others.



Remember that on social media, the number of likes you get, or the number of friends or followers you have, means nothing!

These numbers have nothing to do with how amazing and wonderful you are as a person.





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Key Questions to Think About When Looking at Media

Sometimes, people might confuse the way peoples' lives are shown in media for how peoples' lives are really like or should be like. This can happen with any type of media, and it is okay to make this mistake. Here are some questions people can ask themselves when wondering if the media they are looking at is showing something that is real or fake.



5 Useful Questions:

1. What kind of media is this? (Video, TV show, Instagram post, meme, news article, etc.). Some forms of media may be more trustworthy than others.

2. Who created this media? (Movie, TV show, website, social media post, etc.).

- If they are sharing facts, are they qualified to say those facts?
- Is the person creating the information a trusted person to follow?

3. Why did they create and share this media?

- Was it to educate people?
- Was it to make people laugh?
- Did they get paid to make it? If yes, who paid them?

4. Are there any details that may be missing?

- For example, if they said something is based on science, where is the research to back up what they said?

5. How does it make the person viewing it feel? (happy, sad, upset, confused, angry, etc.)



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Things to Remember When Using the Internet

Sometimes, information people find on the internet says it is true, but it is not. This is called misinformation and it is meant to trick people into believing something that is not true. Here are some helpful tips on how to avoid misinformation in media, and some guidelines on how to look at, watch, and learn from media.

If a person does not know who created the media the information, story, or photo, then it may not be true. Even if the person does know who created it, it still may not be true!

Movies and television are not real stories. Actors are paid to entertain people. Even movies based on a true story will have some made up parts.

If one type of media gives information, look at another type of media made by someone else to compare it with, and see if they say the same thing.

Question what information is being posted on social media. Remember to think about who created it, who posted it, who edited it). Posts may look true but are not actually showing what things are like in life.



If a social media post looks like it is not real a person can ask a trusted person in their life (like a parent, sibling, or friend) if they also think the post is not real.