

Tip sheet

Tip sheet: Addressing false information in class

This tip sheet offers preventative and in-the-moment suggestions for interrupting and correcting false information when it shows up in your classes. This tip sheet and conversations will evolve, especially as AI progresses. We've included additional outside resources for you to learn more.

Before the moment: Prepare and Connect

Tip 1. Get false-information ready

Improve your understanding of false information before class to be ready to address it with students.

- **Define false information.** Develop your understanding of what it is and how it works to be ready to discuss with your class.
 - False information ranges from accidental plagiarism or honest mistakes all the way to using information to intentionally mislead or harm people.
- **False information can spread quickly and be difficult to address.** Some reasons:
 - It plays on emotions, making people less likely to use critical thinking.
 - Information is tied to beliefs and identities, making it hard to challenge or question.
 - Social media creates feedback loops where algorithms show people content related to information they've interacted with, making it difficult to see alternative ideas.
 - Checking and questioning information are not always taught or valued.

More resources

- [Untangling Disinformation](#) (NPR) *short articles and podcasts examining how widespread the problem of disinformation is, and efforts to overcome it.*
- [Most people don't actively seek to share fake news](#) (Scientific American)
- [Misinformation and Disinformation](#) (CCC Library)
- [AI Use Policies – Guidelines and Considerations](#) (CCC Center for Teaching and Learning) *guidance for faculty who want to craft their own AI policy.*

Tip 2. Talk about information...and you!

Be honest about your relationship with information. Sharing why you care about credible information builds trust. It facilitates responding to false information in the moment if you've talked about credible information (good, accurate, authentic, whatever words you use) beforehand.

- **Your information mindset.** Be transparent about how you approach critical thinking.
 - Demonstrate your self-expectations around using information, and your self-awareness of not always knowing what is "good."

- Call out your behaviors, like when you pause and question a source. Why? What sparked that pause? What motivated you to check the source?
- Pepper in quick evaluation tips as you teach, like “look closely at the URL...”
- Acknowledge that thinking critically about information takes time and effort. It is a habit you practice, and good information is a standard you aspire to.
- **Credibility is complex.** Don’t assume a shared understanding of what counts as credible information. Uncover your assumptions together.
 - Collaboratively define what “credible” can mean in your discipline / class / assignment context. Consider context and allow for flexibility.
 - Collaboratively develop expectations around the value of different forms of information (e.g., in the classroom, [knowledge, lived experience, expert opinion] is valued over [ideologies, anonymous opinion] because...).
 - Acknowledge and explore the [limitations of the credibility of Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#).
- **Critical thinking is worth it.** Keep reiterating that pausing and evaluating information matters. It is hard, it is a habit, and you are confident your students can do it.
 - False information isn’t regulated. AI can’t distinguish it. It leads people to make harmful or dangerous decisions. It has “affected our ability to improve public health, address climate change, maintain a stable democracy, and more” ([APA](#)).
 - You care about your students. They deserve accurate information in class and in life. Critical thinking helps ensure they can discern it.

More resources

- [To combat misinformation, start with connection, not correction](#) (NPR) *5-minute read*
- [Opinions are not facts: How scientific curiosity may save us](#) (Medium) *5-minute read*
- [How to teach news literacy in polarizing times](#) (News Literacy Project) *infographic*

In the moment: Interrupt

Tip 3. Ask questions

Interrupting and untangling false information is, at best, an opportunity to open a productive dialogue and is, at not-the-best, the start of unproductive conflict. Avoid the latter (hopefully) by approaching the moment of interruption with curiosity and respect. Rather than telling someone they are wrong or using it as a “gotcha” moment, share your knowledge and ask them about theirs.

- **Prompts for interrupting with curiosity and an intent to learn more**
 - “Where could we go to find out more about that?”
 - “I’m curious to understand what led to that conclusion; can we figure it out together?”
 - “What have other sources reported on that topic?”

- “What evidence do we have to know that is true?”
- “How do we know that source is reliable / credible?”
- “How can we find out if what AI says is accurate?”
- “Is that consistent with what the rest of us have experienced / read / seen?”
- **Prompts for interrupting constructively and respectfully when conflict arises**
 - “Before we continue, I want to acknowledge that we come from different backgrounds and that may be shaping how we interpret or experience this information.”
 - “Let’s work together and identify and acknowledge the valid points that we have heard / read / made.”
 - “Do I [you, we] care enough about this issue to want to learn more?”
 - “Am I [are you, we] open to changing my [your, our] position on this topic?”
 - “What information or evidence would it take to change my [your, our] position on this topic?”
 - “I am trying to understand where you are coming from; would you commit to doing the same for me?”

Tip 4. Pause and create a timeline for follow-up

For many reasons, we can’t always pause and go off on a false information tangent during class. It’s okay to pause and come back to a topic later.

- **Best practice: Explain the pause and make a specific commitment to follow-up**
 - A generic template is “We need to pause because _____, let’s resume this conversation [after, on, when] _____.”
 - “Let’s pause this conversation because we are unsure of the facts. Let’s talk about this next week after we’ve had a chance to read more.”
 - “I need to pause because emotions are high; let’s resume after we’ve all taken a break and had a snack.”
 - “We seem stuck. Let’s take a break and when we come back, let’s identify information / evidence that all sides can agree on.”
 - “Does this feel like the right time and place to address this issue?”

More resources

- Make use of the [After the moment: Follow up](#) section.
- [How to stay open and curious in hard conversations](#) (Greater Good). *Tips for staying curious and asking curiosity-based questions.*
- [Break the fake: Correcting disinformation](#) (MediaSmarts). *Tips on what to do when you see false information online.*

In the moment: Correct

Tip 5. Share accurate information

And, you don't have to know everything. Everyone gets to learn in a classroom.

- **Cite your sources.** Be explicit about using “[informal citations](#)” in your teaching and everyday conversations. For example:
 - The *New York Times* holds itself accountable to [established journalistic standards](#) which is why CCC librarians generally trust it as an accurate source of news.
 - Researchers at the University of Chicago studied [sinus infection-related medical advice](#) shared by TikTok non-medical influencers and found that less than half of the information shared was factual. Don't shove [garlic cloves up your nose](#), I guess.¹
 - Talk about the complexity of [citing information created by AI](#).
- **Prompts for correcting false information.** Model credible information sharing habits and expectations by citing your legitimate source(s).
 - “Let me think out loud for a bit on this and share how I came to a different conclusion.”
 - “I would like to offer an alternative explanation for that [event, situation, conclusion]....”
 - “This is a complex topic; I can add some additional details to help us think about it....”
 - “A source I trust -- [share source name, and why you trust it] -- offers a different interpretation of....”
- **Prompts for having your students correct the false information** by asking them to find accurate information on the topic.
 - “Let's take some time right now to find evidence on these differing ideas.”
 - “Who is a source you trust to deliver you accurate information about this topic? Can you share why you trust them, and what information they are sharing on this topic?”
 - “Can you find and share credible sources that offer differing or contradictory facts (not opinions) on this topic?”

More resources

- [Effective correction of misinformation](#), *Current Opinion in Psychology* (2023).

¹ Fun fact: that TikTok has been shared over 1,980 times while the research article has been [cited 9 times](#) (April 2025).

After the moment: Follow up

Tip 6. Keep your students (and you) accountable

Critical reflection skills are something your students need to learn and practice to build strong information-literacy habits. Use instances of false information in class to strengthen these skills.

- **Model being a lifelong learner** by bringing your openness and curiosity back to class.
 - “After reading everyone’s forum posts, I was curious how I’d developed my beliefs on that subject, so I _____.”
 - “After last week when we identified [misinformation] and figured out that [correct information], I wanted to learn more so I found [additional correct information]....”
- **Synchronous activities**
 - Work with a CCC Librarian to design an in-class information evaluation activity. Give us some context and parameters; we will design an activity for you to adopt, adapt, or invite us in to work through. ([Schedule a consultation.](#))
- **Asynchronous activities**
 - [Your turn to fact check! Online games and quizzes](#) (curated by CCC librarians.) *Games ask students to identify disinformation tactics, discern real or fake AI content, news, and social media accounts. Available in multiple languages.*
 - [Assign CCC Library’s information evaluation tutorials.](#)
 - Embed an existing tutorial into your class; or,
 - Work with a CCC Librarian to design a discipline-specific, outside-of-class information evaluation interactive tutorial (or activity). (Lead time format-dependent.)
- **Tip sheets to share with students.** Reference them in Moodle or in assignments,
 - [How to spot disinformation](#) (National Center for State Courts). *Eight evaluation considerations in infographic form.*
 - [Breaking the cycle: 8 tips for avoiding the misinformation trap](#) (MSU). *Eight evaluation considerations in short paragraph form.*
 - [10 types of misleading news](#) (European Association for Viewers Interests). *Infographic, available in multiple languages.*
 - [Media Bias Charts](#) (recommended by CCC Library). *Three different tools to help information consumers understand news source bias and reliability.*
 - [Authentication 101](#) (MediaSmarts). *When and how to decide if you should share information.*
 - [SIFT](#) (CCC Library website). *A strategy designed to help students find misinformation by Stopping, Investigating, Finding better coverage, and Tracing claims.*

More resources

- [How to talk to friends and family who share misinformation](#) (Pen America)

“Inoculating” your assignments against false information

Tip 7. Consider these ideas for research assignments

- **Design assignments with multiple discrete steps.**
 - Build research process milestones into research assignments. Breaking up research into discrete steps provides opportunities for feedback and conversation along the way to find information--and research process--misunderstandings early on.
- **Define terms and expectations.**
 - Be explicit about what you are asking students to find and use. We don't all know what “Not Google,” “down to earth,” and “library resources” mean. (*These are real examples of instructors' information explanations shared with us by students seeking help.*)
 - Explain to students *why* you expect them to use certain information resources. Unpack the problems with false information as it relates to their studies or lives. Reiterate the value of doing the work of critical thinking about information.
- **Use information as a tool.**
 - Create assignments where students are required to read multiple sides of a topic.
 - Provide students examples of credible *and* false information in your field and lead them through evaluation.
- **Encourage research *before* writing by requiring students to explain their choices.**
 - Include a step asking students to demonstrate their research and reading *before* drawing conclusions. Use an annotated bibliography, completed early enough in the course so students have time to do additional research and reflection based on your feedback.
 - And explain *why* you are including this milestone step. A real--and perennial--occurrence at the CCC Library Research Desk involves students letting us know they've already written their intro, thesis and conclusion, but “just need some evidence to stick in it” or “just need three citations for it.” This is innocent and accidental: students often do not understand that this approach to writing a paper is not good research practice.
- **Incorporate evaluation.**
 - Talk with students about how information created and vetted in your field--or--talk with your neighbors about news, bias, and basic journalistic standards that legitimate news sources follow.
 - Break down research assignments into steps and explicitly include reading and evaluating information before writing starts.
 - Use tools such as SIFT and CRAP to support student information evaluation.

More resources:

- [Library Instruction Request Form](#) (CCC Library). *A librarian can partner with you on how to bring moments of information clarity into your classroom or build/find resources to include in your assignments.*
- [Fact-checking games on CCC Library's website](#) (CCC Library website). *These can be fun ways for your students to learn more about false information and evaluation.*
- [A guide to prebunking: a promising way to inoculate against misinformation](#) (First Draft News) *Tips for designing assignments or activities to help students unlearn false information.*

Tip 8. Inoculation tips re: Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Coming AY25-26. In the meantime, check out:

- [AI Use Policies – Guidelines and Considerations](#) (CCC Center for Teaching and Learning) *excerpt from a recent Faculty Learning Community on equity-minded course policies - guidance for faculty who want to craft their own AI policy.*

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The [prompts for interrupting constructively and respectfully](#) were adopted and / or adapted from Bassalé, Parfait. "Constructive Conflict Engagement-04.09.25" [Zoom webinar]. 09 April 2025, Clackamas Community College.



Tip sheet - printable

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Follow the QR code to access [linked content](#), additional online resources, and updates made since this version was printed.



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