



How to Spot Reliable Information Online

KS3 Ages 11-14 🕒 3 min read

Why Does It Matter?

The **internet** is amazing for finding information, but not everything online is true. Anyone can write anything and publish it online, so you need to be a detective to find reliable sources. Learning to spot trustworthy information is an important skill that will help you throughout your life.

Think of it like shopping for food: just because something is on a shelf doesn't mean it's good quality. You need to check the label, the expiry date, and where it comes from.

Check the Source

Start by asking: **Who wrote this?** Reliable websites usually have author names and clear information about who runs the site. Look for **websites from universities, libraries, governments, or established news organisations**. These places have experts who check facts before publishing. If there's no author listed or the site looks unprofessional, be suspicious.

Look for Evidence

Reliable articles include sources — they tell you where their information came from. Good writers explain their facts with links, references, or citations. If an article makes big claims but doesn't explain where the information comes from, it might not be trustworthy. Ask yourself: could this be proved?

Think of it like a detective story: real detectives show their evidence. If someone just says something without proof, you shouldn't believe them.

Check the Date

When was the article written? **Recent information is usually more reliable** than old information, especially for science and current events. Look for the **publication date** — it should be easy to find. If an article is several years old, check if there's newer information available.

Use Multiple Sources

Never believe something after reading just one article. Check **at least two or three different reliable sources**. If they all say the same thing, you can be more confident. If they disagree, keep looking until you understand why. This is called **cross-checking**.

Think of it like asking friends about something: if three friends all agree, you're more likely to trust them than if just one person told you.

Watch Out for Bias

Bias means favouring one side unfairly. Some websites want to make you believe something specific because it makes them money or helps their beliefs. Look for articles that show **different viewpoints** and admit when they don't know something. Be extra careful with information designed to make you angry or scared — these feelings can make you forget to think critically.

Quick Checklist

Before you share or trust information, ask: Is there a real author? Are there sources listed? Is it recent? Do other websites agree? Does it seem fair and balanced? If you answer 'yes' to most questions, it's probably reliable!