



Britannica  
Digital Learning

# Tackling Coronavirus Talk and Fake News

with Britannica



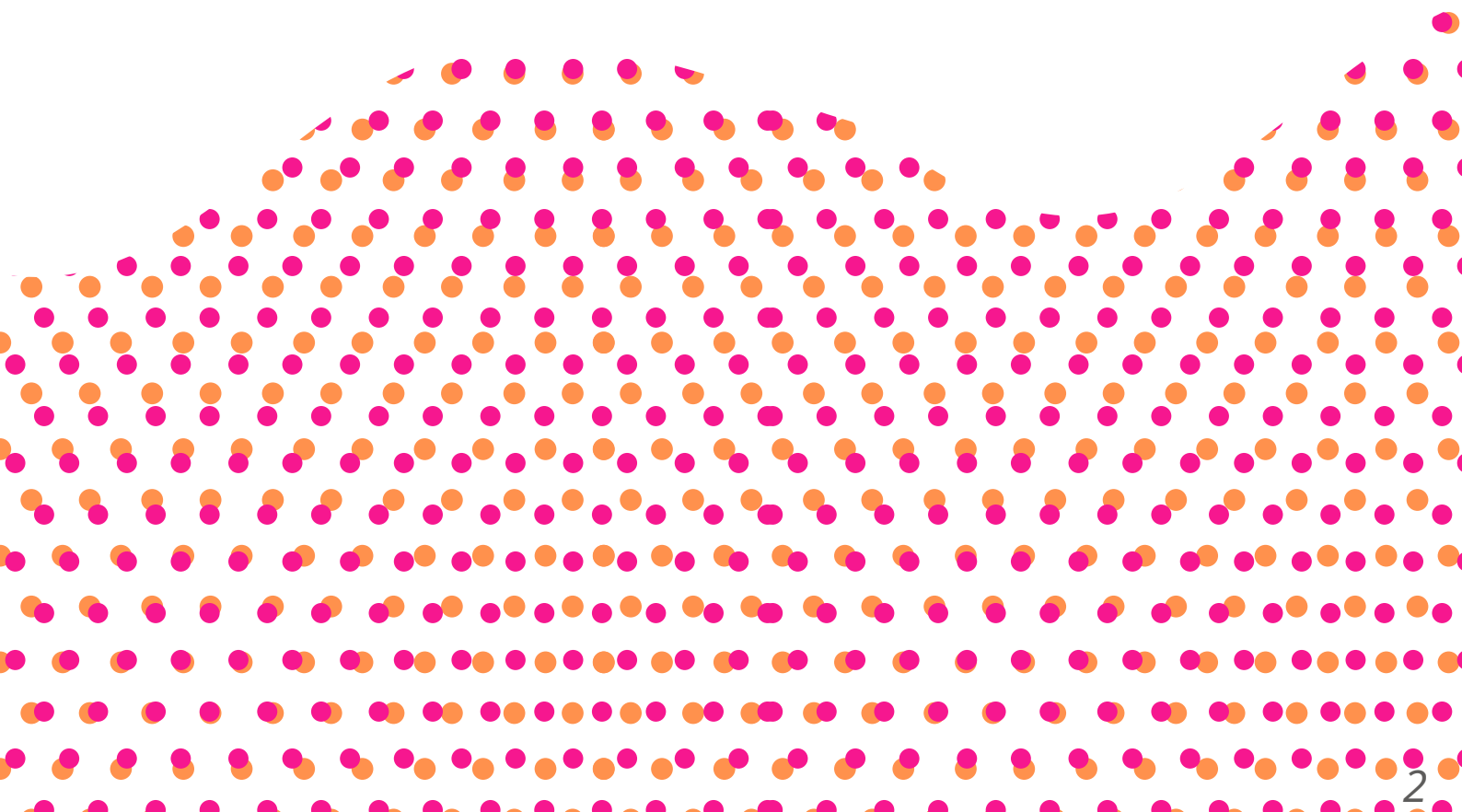
# In this eBook:

Page 3 to 5 - Helping Children Deal with COVID chat

Page 6 to 11 - Media Literacy: Teaching Students to Find the Facts!

Page 12 - How Can Britannica Help You?

Page 13 - Try Out Britannica's 'Fake News' Lesson!







# Helping Children Deal with COVID chat

Ann Gadzikowski

*Director of Early Learning at Encyclopædia Britannica and award-winning author of Creating a Beautiful Mess: Ten Essential Play Experiences for a Joyous Childhood.*

Children from age two to seven are what child development experts call “pre-operational.” This means that even though they are learning language and ideas very rapidly, they still tend to see the world in narrow, concrete terms. They are not yet able to understand the broad context of world events. For example, if a young child hears that people in other places are sick and dying, they may quickly believe that they, too, will soon get sick and die. Regardless of how curious and capable they may seem, what young children need most is reassurance, no matter what.

## Find Out What They Already Know

If the child uses the word coronavirus or talks about people getting sick, try to find out what they already know (or think they know). Some suggested prompts include:

- It sounds like you’ve heard something about the coronavirus. What do you know about that?
- Yes, people have been talking about getting sick. What have you heard about that?
- Lots of people have been talking about the coronavirus lately. Do you know what that is?
- Lots of people are worried about getting sick lately. I wonder why they’re so worried. What do you think?





## Correct Misinformation, Provide a Simple Explanation, and Offer Reassurances

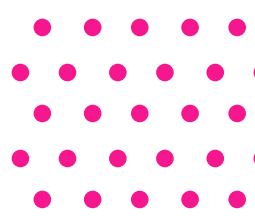
If a child can tell you what they know about the coronavirus, your first job is to correct any misinformation. Offer simple and direct explanations. Here are some suggestions to use with young children:

- The coronavirus is something that can make people sick.
- The coronavirus is a germ, something so small you can't see it.
- Some people have gotten a cough and a fever.
- Some people need medicine when they get sick.
- Some people go to the hospital when they get sick.
- Doctors, nurses, and other workers help sick people feel better and get well.
- Most of the time, people with the coronavirus get better after a little while.
- There are things we can do to keep from getting sick, like washing our hands.

Some young children may have heard that people died from the coronavirus. Don't ignore their fears, but don't dwell on this possibility. Remember, what young children need most is reassurance that we will take care of them, no matter what. If a child brings up death, you might say something like this:

Yes, some people have died from the coronavirus, but that doesn't happen very often. Most people get well. I don't think that's something we need to worry about.





After this, do not forget to reassure them. Remind them of times they've gotten sick and then recovered:

Everybody gets sick sometimes and it's part of being alive. Remember when you were sick? There are so many helpers, like doctors and teachers, and people who love you who are ready to take care of you whenever you need us.

And finally, take care of yourself. When you are calm and rested, the children you are teaching, or parenting, will feel more secure and confident. Slow down, breathe, and take each day and each moment just one step at a time.

## Learn More

*Click below to read*



### Talking to Kids about the Coronavirus

Rachel Ehmke



### How to Talk to your Kids about Coronavirus

Deborah Farmer Kris





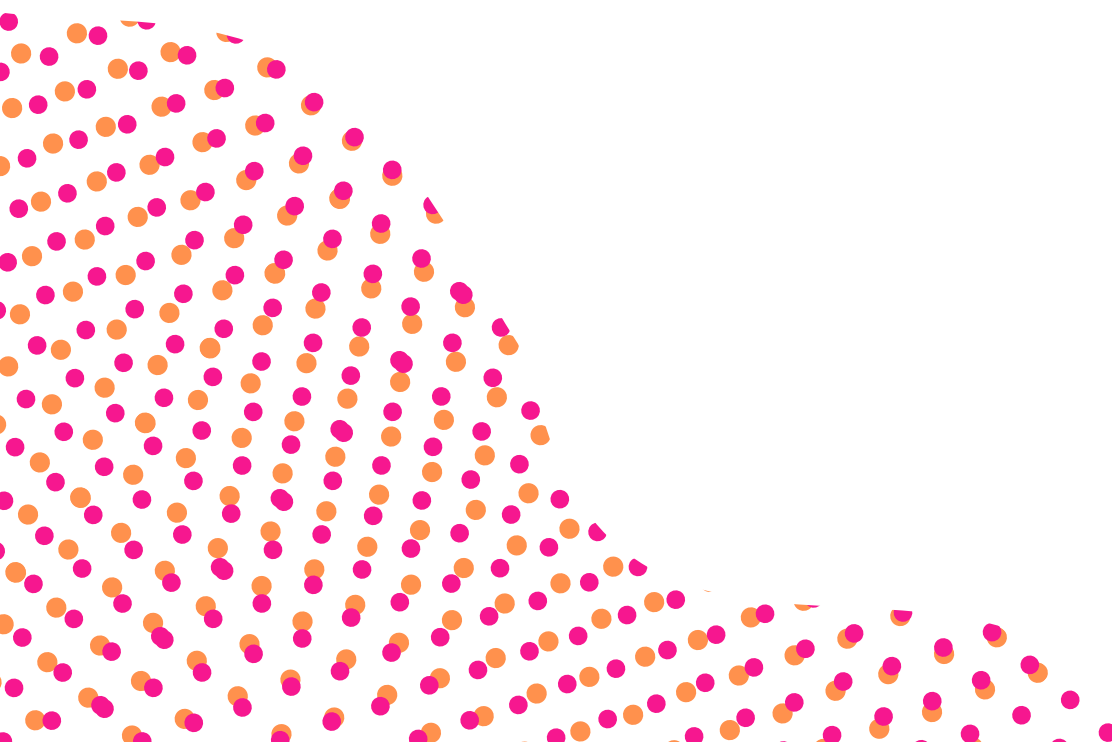
# Media Literacy: Teaching Students to Find the Facts!

Ann Gadzikowski

*Director of Early Learning at Encyclopædia Britannica and award-winning author of Creating a Beautiful Mess: Ten Essential Play Experiences for a Joyous Childhood.*

Helping children safely navigate the Internet is just one part of developing media literacy. So, what is media literacy?

According to the National Association for Media Literacy Education, “Media literacy is the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication. . . . Media literacy empowers people to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens.” In short, media literacy is the ability to identify different types of media, understand the messages they are sending and being able to criticise their accuracy and reliability.







## What Can Families Do?

Media literacy begins developing as soon as children start using digital devices to view media. Parents and carers can plant the seeds of critical thinking, even with very young children, by asking questions and sparking conversations that help children think about how and why media has been created.

Here are some types of conversations to have with children when watching the news, an advertisement, a social media post, or any other kind of media.





## 1. Who created this?

Encourage children to look for clues and information that tell us who made something. Even before children learn to read, they can begin to recognise logos and trademarks.

Help them understand that media is created by individuals or groups. For example, most broadcasters are created by big companies whereas most social media posts (but not all) are created by individuals; they need to understand this difference.

## 2. Why was this made?

Engage in conversations that help them understand the motivations and goals behind the media they consume. Ask open-ended questions like, 'Why did they make this?' 'What are they trying to get us to think or do?' This is challenging, even for adults. Some reasons might be obvious—a funny show was made to make us laugh or an advertisement was made to get us to buy a product. But often the reasons are not clear, particularly with social media.

Allow the young learner to ponder, make guesses, and draw conclusions. Ask them to describe his or her thinking by asking follow-up questions like, 'How do you know?' or 'Why do you think that?' What's important here is that they are learning to think critically and independently.



### 3. Who are they talking to?

Understanding that media is made for a specific audience is part of media literacy. Children can begin learning to identify how media is often targeted to connect with or persuade people of a particular age, gender, or other characteristics. Again, ask them to describe their thinking by asking follow-up questions like, 'How do you know?' or 'Why do you think that?'

### 4. How do we know if this is true?

Learning to verify the accuracy of what we see, hear, and read in the media is an important challenge. Most children will receive some instruction in school about how to conduct research, verify facts, and cite sources. We need to model how to verify the accuracy of the information you encounter in your own experiences with media. For example, talk about how you select and use common reference tools, like certain traffic reports or weather maps.

Explain which news sources you trust and why. When a child is confused about whether something is real or fake, instead of telling them the right answer immediately, ask questions to help your child evaluate the situation. Ask questions like, 'Where does this information come from?' and 'How do you know?' Learning to tell the difference between fact and fiction will be an ongoing challenge. These conversations will help empower our young learners to seek the truth.





## 5. What's missing?

As children get older and they develop more complex critical thinking skills, they'll begin to recognise that something they see or hear in the media may be true but it may also be incomplete. Another part of media literacy is considering the question, 'What information has been left out?' and 'What else do you want to know?'



## 6. How did this make you feel?

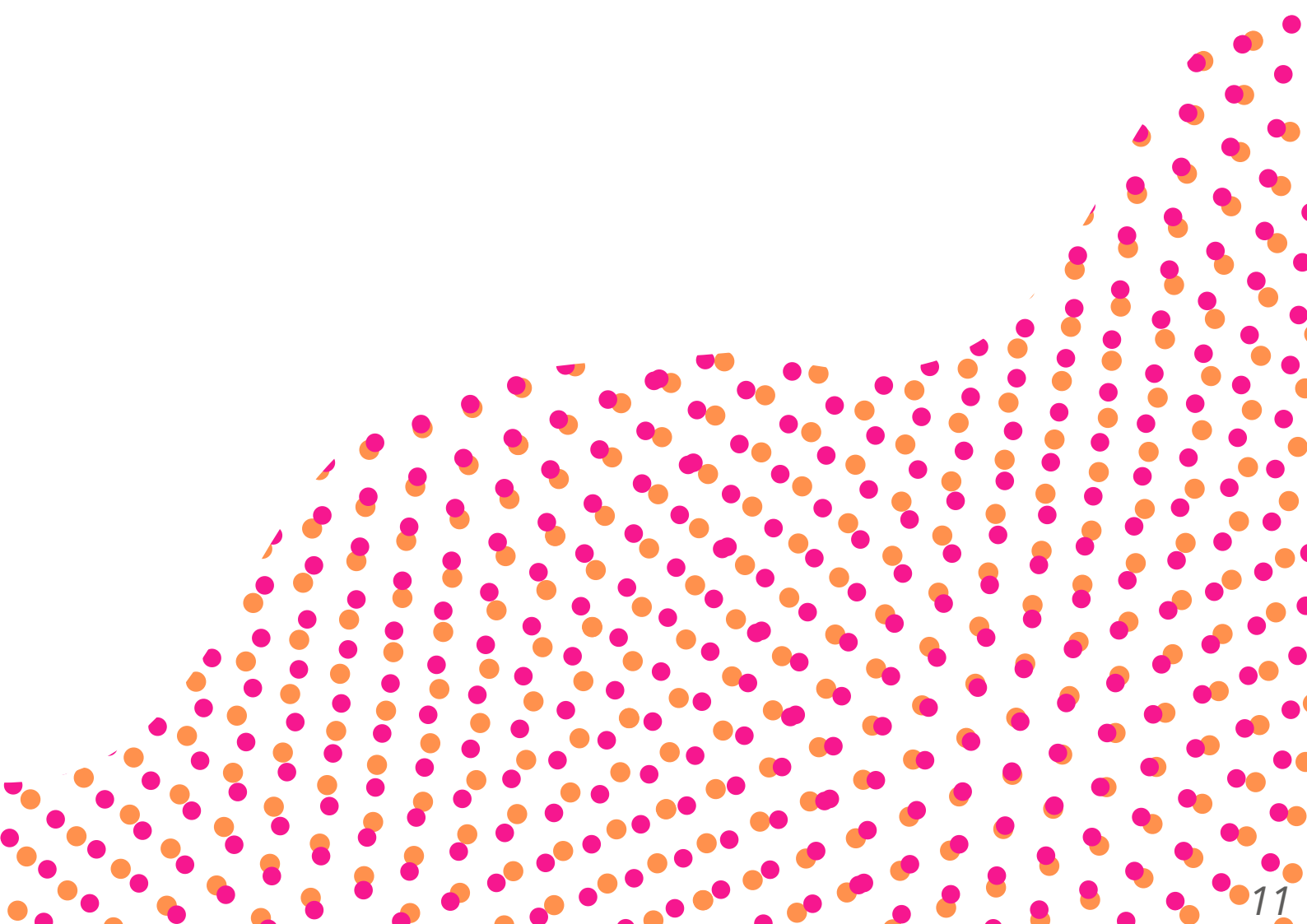
Children and young adults are easily influenced by media. Often they haven't yet developed the skills, knowledge, and experience to understand what they are seeing. Helping them recognise and express their feelings is an essential part of a media experience. When they have a strong emotional response to something in the media, ask 'How did this make you feel?' and 'Why?' Older children will begin to understand some of the strategies and techniques used in media that create an emotional response.



Most adults have a love-hate relationship with technology. We love staying connected with friends and family on our devices and in social media. We're also terrified of the impact of screens and media on our children's developing brains and tender hearts. Teaching young learners about media literacy and engaging in conversations that develop critical thinking will be among the most valuable and satisfying things you can do to equip a child with 21st century skills.

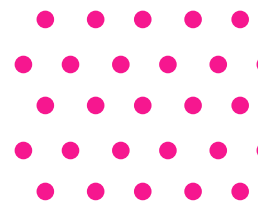
### **Sources**

[National Association for Media Literacy Education, "Media Literacy Defined," \[n.d.\]](#)





# How can Britannica help you?



[Click here to find out more about Britannica](#)

Britannica School is an online learning resource trusted by teachers and pupils. The information in Britannica School is cross-curricular and multidisciplinary, updated daily and spans a range of media. It minimises teacher workload and enhance media literacy skills by collating authoritative, unbiased, vetted, and differentiated resources around topics that correlate with their teaching and learning.



Britannica is a **safe and secure** platform where all information stored has been through a meticulous vetting process and is strictly for **education purposes**, containing **non-biased information**.

Britannica has a **citation tool** which allows individuals to identify where their information has come from.

Britannica provides a **'Web's Best Sites' tool** that allows people to explore the web using only **relevant and reliable sources** for their information.





# Try Out Britannica's 'Fake News' Lesson!

Britannica's lesson on fake news strives to educate students on finding the difference between reliable and unreliable sources, using information provided on Britannica School.

It covers the following objectives:

1. Know the meaning of fake news
2. Understand the importance of knowing the difference between what is fake news and what is real news
3. Be able to identify what is fake news and what is real news.

The lesson comes with discussion points, activities, and advice on how to differentiate between reliability of sources, as well as a worksheet!

*Click below to view the lesson:*




Presentation



Worksheet





**Contact us for help or more  
resources:**

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E-mail: [enqbol@britannica.co.uk](mailto:enqbol@britannica.co.uk)



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