



# The Basics: Different types of false/misleading information

## MISINFORMATION

**Meaning:** Wrong information shared by mistake.

**Spot it:** “My mate said...” or a screenshot with no source.

**Example:** An untrue post about a celebrity dying goes viral.

**What to do:** Pause → find a reliable source → don’t repost unless it’s true!

## DISINFORMATION

**Meaning:** Wrong information shared on purpose to mislead people.

**Spot it:** Dramatic claims + conspiracy theories + no evidence.

**Example:** A fake news account invents a story to stir anger before an event.

**What to do:** Look for original sources; check multiple reputable outlets.

## MALINFORMATION

**Meaning:** True information used in a harmful way (often out of context).

**Spot it:** Real quote/video edited to change the meaning.

**Example:** Clip makes someone look guilty, the full video shows the opposite.

**What to do:** Find the full version/context before forming an opinion.

## SATIRE/PARODY

**Meaning:** Content meant as a joke, not a factual report.

**Spot it:** Absurd headlines, comedy sites, exaggerated tone.

**Example:** A parody headline gets screenshotted and shared as “proof”.

**What to do:** Check the source; search the headline phrase.

## RUMOUR/GOSSIP

**Meaning:** Unconfirmed information spreading person-to-person.

**Spot it:** “Apparently...” “My cousin’s friend...” etc.

**Example:** “School’s closing tomorrow” spreads before any official message.

**What to do:** Wait for an official announcement.

## HOAX

**Meaning:** A made-up story designed to trick, or con people.

**Spot it:** Urgent sharing requests: “Share before it’s deleted!”

**Example:** Fake warnings with no evidence.

**What to do:** Check for credible reporting; reverse-image search.

## How we are influenced by information

### ALGORITHM

**Meaning:** A system delivering online content based on what you watch/like.

**Spot it:** Your feed becomes “more of the same.”

**Example:** Watch one angry rant, your feed fills with similar rants.

**What to do:** Reset your feed habits; follow varied sources.

### ENGAGEMENT

**Meaning:** Likes, comments, shares – signals that boost content.

**Spot it:** Rage-bait designed to make you react.

**Example:** A post results in people arguing in the comments, boosting it.

**What to do:** Don't feed it; report/mute/block.

### RAGE-BAIT/CLICKBAIT

**Meaning:** Content made to trigger anger for clicks and attention.

**Spot it:** “You won't believe...” “Shocking...” “Outrageous...” but little evidence.

**Example:** “Look what they're teaching kids!” with a cropped image.

**What to do:** **Ask:** Find the full context and read beyond the headline.

### ECHO CHAMBER

**Meaning:** Online space where you mostly hear opinions like your own.

**Spot it:** Everyone in your feed agrees; dissent gets mocked.

**Example:** Group chat where one viewpoint is the only acceptable one.

**What to do:** Follow credible voices across different perspectives.

### SOCIAL PROOF

**Meaning:** “If lots of people believe it, it must be true.”

**Spot it:** High likes used as evidence.

**Example:** A fake post has 50k likes, so people trust it.

**What to do:** Prioritise accuracy over popularity.

### CONFIRMATION BIAS

**Meaning:** We prefer information that matches what we already believe.

**Spot it:** “I knew it!” feeling can be a danger sign.

**Example:** People dislike a group & believes any negative rumour about them.

**What to do:** Ask yourself WHY you want to believe something.

## **AUTHORITY BIAS**

**Meaning:** Believing something because it comes from someone with status.

**Spot it:** “Doctor/politician says...” with no verifiable identity.

**Example:** Someone in a lab coat on TikTok claims miracle experiment.

**What to do:** Verify credentials; check professional sources.

## **UNCONSCIOUS BIAS**

**Meaning:** Automatic judgments we make about people without realising it.

**Spot it:** Quick snap decisions e.g. “he looks dodgy,” without evidence.

**Example:** A teacher always asks boys to do tech tasks without realising.

**What to do:** Pause, question your first assumption, find supporting evidence.

## **Manipulation tactics you might encounter!**

### **OTHERING**

**Meaning:** Framing a group as different, alien, or outside social “normality”.

**Spot it:** “Us vs them” language like “they don’t belong here”.

**Example:** Claim that a group is dangerous and not as law-abiding as others.

**What to do:** Challenge the claim with facts, reinforce shared humanity.

### **WHATABOUTISM**

**Meaning:** Dodging the issue by switching to “what about...?”

**Spot it:** Changing the subject instead of answering directly.

**Example:** “Why talk about bullying? What about kids being rude to teachers?”

**What to do:** Back to topic - “That’s separate – answer the first point.”

### **SCAPEGOATING**

**Meaning:** Blaming an individual or group for a complex problem.

**Spot it:** “It’s all because of them.”

**Example:** “Our town is struggling because of all the boats.”

**What to do:** Ask where is the evidence?

## STRAW MAN

**Meaning:** Misrepresenting someone's argument to knock it down easily.

**Spot it:** "So you're saying..." followed by a distorted version.

**Example:** You care about mental health, so you don't believe in discipline?"

**What to do:** Restate what was actually said.

## DOG WHISTLE

**Meaning:** Coded language that signals to insiders without being obvious.

**Spot it:** "Just asking questions" + repeated coded phrases.

**Example:** Posts use "in-jokes" to target group while claiming innocence.

**What to do:** Look for patterns and subtext; ask "What's implied?"

## CHERRY-PICKING

**Meaning:** Selecting only the facts that support your claim.

**Spot it:** One statistic given with no wider context.

**Example:** "Crime doubled!" (from 1 to 2 ) technically true, but misleading.

**What to do:** Ask: "Compared to what? Over what time?"

## DEHUMANISATION

**Meaning:** Talking about people like they're less than human.

**Spot it:** Comparing groups to animals, disease, or "infestation."

**Example:** Comment sections using dehumanising language about a group.

**What to do:** Treat as a major red flag; report and step away.

## The road to extremism: concepts you need to know.

### RADICALISATION

**Meaning:** Gradually adopting more extreme views that can justify harm.

**Spot it:** Increasing "us vs them," contempt, and admiration for violence.

**Example:** Developing misogynistic views from watching manosphere content.

**What to do:** Talk to a trusted adult; don't debate alone online.

### EXTREMISM

**Meaning:** Beliefs that reject others' rights & can support harm or intimidation.

**Spot it:** Justifying cruelty "for a cause," celebrating harm, calling for exclusion.

**Example:** "Some people shouldn't be allowed to exist here" type rhetoric.

**What to do:** Recognise it early; get support; report threat

## GRIEVANCE

**Meaning:** A strong sense of being wronged, real or not, that is used as fuel.

**Spot it:** Constant focus on humiliation, betrayal, revenge.

**Example:** “Everyone’s against us; we’ve been robbed” repeated narrative.

**What to do:** Separate feelings from facts; seek balanced perspectives.

## US VERSUS THEM THINKING

**Meaning:** Seeing “good people like us” and “bad people like them.”

**Spot it:** Simplistic blame; no nuance; “traitors” language.

**Example:** “If you disagree, you’re the enemy.”

**What to do:** Ask: “Is there any middle ground?” What is my bias here?

## RECRUITMENT

**Meaning:** Trying to pull others into a cause, group, or ideology.

**Spot it:** Flattery + belonging + secret “truth.”

**Example:** “You’re smarter than most people, you get it. Join our group chat.”

**What to do:** Be cautious with private chats and exclusivity.

## GROOMING

**Meaning:** Building trust to reshape someone’s beliefs and boundaries.

**Spot it:** “I’m understands you” - isolation from friends/family.

**Example:** Manosphere influencer regularly DMs, escalating beliefs over time.

**What to do:** Screenshot, block, tell a trusted adult.

## NORMALISATION

**Meaning:** Making extreme ideas feel ordinary by repetition and humour.

**Spot it:** “It’s just banter” used to excuse harmful views.

**Example:** Repeated “jokes” about a group until it becomes acceptable.

**What to do:** Name it - it’s not banter when you’re not in on the joke.

## DESENSITISATION

**Meaning:** Getting used to shocking content so it stops feeling shocking.

**Spot it:** Needing more extreme content to feel anything.

**Example:** Violent clips become “background noise.”

**What to do:** Step away, reset your feed, talk about it.