

SHORTS

Grade depends on the activity (times vary)

“Shorts” refers to the nature of the description, not the length or significance of the activity. Most of the “shorts” activities are recommended lessons or materials created by other organizations. The descriptions focus on how to use these resources to support learning as students gain proficiency in ACT’s seven main skill areas.

ACT includes them because, given the urgency of the need to teach about misinformation, educators need all the support they can get. There are several great media and information literacy (MIL) organizations that address misinformation and provide age-appropriate resources for elementary school students. We think educators ought to draw from all of them.

Follow the links to find more detailed instructions for each of these activities. Organizations may require you to create an account, but except for recommended books, the listed resources (and the accounts) are free.

House Hippo (grades 3-5)

A great way to review and reinforce ACT lessons is to show the video on [Slide #21 What's RealOnline? | Media Literacy Lesson](#) from MediaSmarts (a Canadian media literacy education organization).

Pause at each point suggested by the narrator and discuss the prompts that he suggests. Especially emphasize what students learn about framing. What other information is familiar? If a strategy that’s new to your students is introduced, consider offering opportunities to pause and allow students to practice applying what the video suggests.



Note: The House Hippo was part of a famous Canadian public service announcement and campaign addressing media fakes. It is well known to most Canadians. The PSA is included in the video, which shows how the house hippo was shot to make it look real.

The Question Game grades (2-5)

Spark a lesson on research skills by showing an interesting image and give students a time limit to generate as many questions as they can. In the upper elementary grades you might even make it a friendly competition by dividing into teams to see who can generate the most.

If you don't have an image of your own, you could start with one of these:



[Slide #22](#)



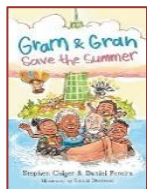
[Slide #23](#)

With the full group, review all their questions, identifying the types that are silly (which is fine – this is a game) and those that are interesting. Together, select one to answer. Use the answer-seeking process to teach the research skill of the day (e.g., doing an image search or using the search function on the library's computers). Then allow students time to practice that skill using other questions on the list. The difference between doing this with second graders and fifth graders will be the complexity of research skill(s) you choose to teach.

The game builds inquiry skills by giving students practice asking questions and hearing the types of questions that others ask. And they're more likely to engage in the research skill lesson because they're looking for answers to their own questions or questions that peaked their interest.

Once students are familiar with the game, invite them (or their families) to contribute their own interesting images for analysis. To ensure that images meet school standards for safety and appropriateness, you'll want to review submissions to prior to presenting them to students. You might also set some ground rules for images, such as no AI-generated fakes, no violence, no pictures of people used without permission, etc.

Book Club (grades 4-5)



Lead a book group read/discussion of *Gram and Gran Save the Summer*. Together, solve the challenge posed at the end of each chapter. Topics include algorithms, phishing, verification, skepticism, source reliability and much more. A [full teacher guide](https://stevechiger.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Gram-and-Gran-Teacher-Guide.pdf) is available: <https://stevechiger.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Gram-and-Gran-Teacher-Guide.pdf>

This could also be a recommendation to families, perhaps for a summer read. Add a tip sheet on the value of having conversations with kids about what they have read. Include a few recommended conversation starters.

Practicing Inquiry with Dinosaurs (grades 3-4)

Lead the Project Look Sharp lesson "[Dinosaurs: What's True and What's Not.](#)" Guide students to apply inquiry techniques, including compare/contrast skills, to as many of these as possible: animated film, illustration, informational text, poster, print advertisement, television program, and/or webpage. As much as possible, have them (not just you) ask the questions that would help them decide what's true.

When students offer answers, keep the focus on probing for evidence. What clues do/can students use to discern whether something is fact/real or fantasy/pretend? Work as a group to develop a list of clues they can use to analyze future media example to determine if they should accept it as factual or truthful.

Follow-up the lesson (perhaps during the next class or library visit) by inviting students to consider whether any of the sources were intentionally misleading or whether they were simply fantasy. Ask: *What's the difference between misinformation and fantasy?* Help them understand the terms:

- misinformation - intentionally misleading

- fantasy - includes things that can't happen in the real world; one type of fiction

- general fiction - may be based on real people or events, but also uses imagination to tell stories that did not actually happen.

Note that fantasy and other fiction might reveal “truths” about life, relationships, emotions, and the like, but it isn't the same as non-fiction or news, both of which present factual, verifiable information.

Using *Baby Sharks* to Explore Fact, Fake, or Fiction (grades K-2)

To help students learn the difference between media that's just for fun and media that is meant to inform, lead the [Baby Sharks](#) lesson in Project Look Sharp's collection.

Help students understand that fun media can be accurate sometimes, but they are fun because they can invent things, sometimes even things that can't happen in real life. That means they are not the best sources when you need facts. Emphasize asking: *If I'm looking for facts about sharks, which would be a better source: the Baby Sharks video or a non-fiction library book about sharks?*

Tie the lesson to your library resources by explaining that libraries are designed to help students distinguish between types of resources. Show them the ways that your library does this, and check for understanding to see if they can identify where/how they would find resources if they wanted facts about sharks.

Practice Choosing Sources with Spiderman (grades 1-3)

Use Project Look Sharp's [Liquids in Spiderman](#) lesson to help students consider whether superhero media are good choices for science information. Follow up by inviting students to consider whether superhero media are likely to be credible sources for non-science information. This is a way of helping them articulate other ideas they may be absorbing from what they watch (and which of those are valid).

Show students how they could use library resources (and/or websites like Wonderopolis.org - explaining why you trust the resources you recommend, of course!) to find out whether something they saw in a movie or cartoon is accurate. If, at first, students don't have any questions, be ready with a few of your own and invite them to bring questions to you next time. For example, Can someone really get superpowers from a spider bite? Is/was there really a place called Wakanda? Is vibranium a real mineral?

As part of this process, be sure that students know the difference between fact & fiction, including the notion that there are things in fictional stories that might be true, but authors of fiction (especially in the fantasy genre) also invent things, so if students really need factual information, it's best to go to a non-fiction source.

Types of Misinformation (grades 4-5)



Review the News Literacy Project’s “[Five Types of Misinformation](#)” poster. Use examples from the organization’s Checkology resources and/or subscribe to *The Sift* and use its up-to-date examples to practice applying them. Note: NLP’s resources are designed for older students – you may need to adapt for early elementary.

Unearthing Stereotypes (grades 2-3)

Stereotypes are a form of misinformation because they intentionally convey erroneous overgeneralizations about groups of people. Use Project Look Sharp’s “[Unearthing Stereotypes](#)” to help students consider where their ideas come from and if those sources are valid. If time is an issue, use fewer slides. The lesson reveals stereotypes about Africa. If Africa isn’t relevant for your curriculum needs, use the lesson as a model to develop your own slide deck about a relevant place or group of people. https://projectlooksharp.org/front_end_resource.php?resource_id=244

Create PSAs (grades 2-5)

As a way to assess or review what students have learned about misinformation, help them make PSAs that help others learn how to spot online deception and/or identify reliable, accurate sources. These could take the form of infographics, short videos, or even posters or bulletin board displays.

Start with an open-ended query: *What do you think is important for people to know about misinformation?* As students engage in the decision-making process about what to include in their PSA, remind them of what they learned about framing. Be sure they identify their target audience and consider how their proposed content matches that audience.

It is possible for each student to make their own PSA, but the learning will be much richer if they work in small groups because group work requires them to justify and explain their content and production choices.

You might use the [House Hippo PSA](#) (see above) as a springboard to inspire their efforts. Research shows that students are also inspired by making media for authentic audiences, so consider how their work might be shared with other students, family members, the school board, the community – even at education conferences!

Be Internet Awesome (grades 2-3)

Lead the lessons Share with Care: “Frame It,” It’s Cool to Be Kind: “How Words Can Change a Picture” and/or any of the Don’t Fall for Fake unit lessons from Google’s [Be Internet Awesome](#) curriculum. Note that the curriculum is from Google, so it doesn’t question any Google structures or products.