



A framework for living and thriving in an information society

The Media and Information Literacy Alliance (MILA) has developed a framework that draws from real life examples provided by sector representatives from the Information Literacy Group (ILG) at CILIP.

The purpose of the framework is to demonstrate what media and information literacy means for people in everyday life and in various recognisable settings. It thus seeks to make media and information literacy understandable by relating it to situations with which everyone can readily identify. To do this, the framework identifies five lifelong aspirations:

- Be informed
- Be empowered
- Be healthy
- Be socially conscious
- Be connected

The framework sets out examples that illustrate how media and information literacy as well as digital literacy can help achieve these aspirations. Other literacies have been embedded and flagged up in the “related literacies” category for each aspiration. The examples, spanning the health, school, and public sectors as well as day to day anecdotal experiences, form a landscape of issues encountered in society. The representation of those issues adds depth and a more granular understanding of what it is like to be media and information literate.

The framework is intended for all of us (whatever our walk of life, interest or need for information) to reflect on how we get the most out of the information that we encounter, use and create; and how to reach decisions about the nature, relevance, usefulness and quality of such information, in the context of the five aspirations.

The framework is designed to be adapted to suit individual and organisations’ needs and strategies. Some of the statements relate to several aspirations and thus reflect the complexity of media and information literacy. They also illustrate the underlying knowledge, skills and behaviour that people need to be media and information literate as well as the transferable nature of these abilities.

The framework provides educators with a way to articulate current training and understand its impact. It is also a way to organise regular media and information literacy issues that people encounter and develop strategies/teaching content. The framework includes examples of the type of everyday problems that information literacy can help with, a set of assertions that people will understand (knowledge), and then things they can do (skills). Additional work is planned in 2022. A glossary and guidance notes will be developed to support users of the framework. Feedback from information literacy practitioners who teach in more formal settings will be sought to translate the framework into concrete learning outcomes, learning activities and suggested ways of assessing the abilities.



Be informed: To be able to find trustworthy information, fact check it and make sense of it.

Related literacies: digital literacy, critical literacy

Examples:

I found this interesting news article which I have shared on Facebook. Friends tell me it's inaccurate. How can I check?	A friend has given me a leaflet from their church. How do I know if it's not a cult?
A celebrity I follow on Instagram keeps recommending a make-up company. Do they really like it or is it advertising?	I want to learn more about the history of conflicts in the Middle East. Where do I start?

I understand:

- **Information has value and purpose.** There are many different types of information online, ranging from national guidance, to commercial to accounts of personal experience. However not all information is freely available online, sometimes I might need to pay for information or news. I need to understand the structures and business models underlying paid for and free information services.
- **Not all information is reliable or accurate.** Sometimes information is not accurate or even downright wrong, either deliberately or for other reasons. I need to be mindful of both mis- and disinformation.
- **Some people have expertise.** Experts play an important role in providing society with evidence . Experts have knowledge or first-hand experience of a topic or issue. Scientists, health care practitioners, researchers and academics have a depth of professional understanding which, while needing to be scrutinised, usually makes them best qualified to reach views about their own areas. However, I recognise that uncertainty and different interpretations exist even amongst experts.I need to explore who is behind this information to decide what is most authoritative and useful for my needs.
- **Many subjects and issues are complex and open to interpretation.** To make up my mind, I want to use multiple sources to verify information that I find and to make evidence-based decisions.
- **There are recognised ways of checking facts, identifying biases and inaccuracies.** The problem with the proliferation of 'fake news' is it creates a sense that no one can be trusted. There are organisations dedicated to fact checking or listing out known scams, and plenty of reliable authoritative sources of advice.

I can:

- Check the authorship of the information I find and assess its level of authority.
- Tell the difference between misinformation and disinformation and describe their features.
- Decide what gives authors their authority and understand the role of experts in a particular subject or debate and why their views may carry more weight than others.
- Check multiple sources and make my own decision based on a range.
- Use a range of methods to verify a story.
- Be comfortable with a level of uncertainty when making decisions



Be empowered: To be able to make the right decisions for my own personal and professional development and to support those around me.

Related literacies: financial literacy, data literacy, online privacy literacy, political literacy

Examples:

The local elections are coming up. How do I register to vote? There are so many links I don't know which one is official.	I am having some problems with a work colleague and I have shared those on a public Facebook group. What would happen if my employer found those?
I have been asked to share my mental health story for a charity's blog. I am worried about people's comments. How can I protect myself?	My energy bill is very high. The supplier says I have to pay an exit fee, but I have been with them for years. How do I get a better tariff?

I understand:

- **I am a responsible user and creator of information.** The information I share and create is as important as the information I find. I check how my information and data is being used and I have control of who sees my social media posts and how to protect myself against phishing.
- **I am a responsible and informed consumer and citizen.** I can check the credentials of where I purchase online from and I am aware of scams. I have secure access to my banking services and commercial websites.
- **I care for my mental health.** I know about online harms; how social media affect my mental health and how to take proactive steps to protect yourself.
- **I am responsible for making informed decisions about my future.** I research information about changes I want to make in my life by verifying official sources against other websites.
- **I support others in developing themselves.** I know how to talk to others about the way I interact with information and can support them to change their habits.

I can:

- Change privacy settings on social media and tailor my audiences to decide what I share and with whom.
- Compare different prices and outlets to find the best offers. I can also tell which site reviews are genuine to appraise a product.
- Distinguish different types of harmful content and change settings to automatically block publications I know will impact my mental health.
- Identify information from official sources (ie. .gov.uk, .ac.uk, .org) and contrast with to others.
- Explain the different ways in which I find and appraise reliable information and can have conversations about why this is important.



Be healthy: To be able to find reliable health information to make decisions to manage your health and to care for others.

Related literacies: health literacy, digital literacy, data literacy

Examples:

I called the GP to find out my diabetes blood test results, but I don't understand the values. Am I at risk?	I have been prescribed a new medication but I'm not sure about the side effects. What do the names mean?
I am pregnant. My friend posted a video on Facebook about risks of COVID-19 vaccines on foetuses. How can I check if this is true?	I read that the BMI calculations were inaccurate measures. How do I know if I really need to lose weight?

I understand:

- **Health information is complex.** Medical language, data and instructions can be daunting. I need to break it down and find definitions to understand and research each element. If you are anxious, then health information may be harder to understand.
Health information changes frequently. To be useful, health information has to be up to date. Resources should include a review date that is still a future date. Be wary of undated information.
Health information should be based on current evidence. Sources of evidence should be listed so that you know that the information is based on current research.
- **Health information does not form a diagnosis.** Medical information covers what is most common and likely. I can research conditions, symptoms, treatments... and use the information I find to lead discussions with health practitioners to empower me to make conscious decisions for my personal health needs.
- **Health information is an emotive topic.** I look for health information at times when I need it the most and that means that I might feel emotional. Misinformation and disinformation are produced to trigger an emotion and a reaction for you to reshare. I need to check the claims from content I find online.
- **Health Information should be in the format that is right for you.** If I need information in a specific format, such as British Sign Language, I have a right to request it under the Accessible Information Standard.

I can:

- Break down the information I need in its most simple form to research everything I need to know.
- Find out the purpose and bias of health information I find online and decide how this affects my search.
- Check that the information is up to date.
- Relate information I find online to my own purpose and work out how to talk to a health professional about it.
- Look up the authorship of content found on social media and verify some of the claims. I know how to report and challenge the information if needed.
- Request health information in an accessible format.



Be socially conscious: To be able to use information to make a positive impact in my community and for those around me.

Related literacies: ethics, copyright literacy, digital literacy

Examples:

I keep seeing online stories about QAnon and a friend tells me the US government is lying. How do I explain to them it is a conspiracy theory?	My community centre is not disability friendly. What can I do to change the situation?
I keep hearing about “Black Lives Matter”, taking the knee and being an ally. What does this mean?	I heard about harmful chemicals in my laundry detergent. How do they affect the environment and my health in the long-term?

I understand:

- **I am accountable for the information I share.** Anybody can create and manipulate information to suit their purposes. Before sharing with others it is important I take my time, to avoid hasty reactions, to fact check posts, videos, statements before posting. I should be able to stand by the content I share and defend it.
- **I am responsible for my online actions and their real-life consequences.** Online behaviour should mirror the norms of offline behaviour and I should be mindful of the things I post online and how I present myself on online platforms. I should be aware of the consequences for my mental health and the mental health of others.
- **I have my own biases.** These biases affect the way I look for information and the results I find. When looking for information; I do so with a clear purpose in mind: to answer a question, to be proven right, to understand something, to make a decision... Reflecting on why I am looking and what you are hoping to find will help you assess the information you find more efficiently.
- **I can use, reuse, and share content fairly and ethically.** Intellectual property created by others should only be used or shared fairly and / or with permission. I understand the need to attribute the work of others and to avoid infringing copyright.
- **I am respectful and considerate to others online.** I know what is acceptable and what needs reporting. Acceptable behaviour on online platforms should mirror standards in everyday life. However, it’s easy to be anonymous online and to witness unpleasant comments and trolling of others. These behaviours should not be tolerated and I should support those who experience bullying or threats online.

I can:

- Cross-reference information before I share it or write a comment to explain why I am sharing this.
- Check the way I have written to someone online and ask myself if this is the way I would communicate in person.
- Assess the information I find against my biases and check alternative viewpoints for comparison.
- Find out who owns pictures I reuse, find copyright-free images or attribute correctly.
- Report online posts following community guidelines put in place by the site provider.



Be connected: To be able to evaluate, choose and use the right online services and information effectively and responsibly.

Related literacies: digital literacy, data literacy

Examples:

I am applying for jobs and I don't want employers to see my social media. How do I block them?	My child plays online games on my tablet. How can I keep them safe and stop them paying for loot bundles?
I need a new lawnmower. How do I find out the good models and how to pay less?	I can't receive payments unless I switch to online banking. Where do I start?

I understand:

- **My online information is visible to all.** All my online interactions and personal details leave what is called a digital footprint. My digital footprint can be easily traced and reused without your knowledge.
- **My personal data is valuable.** My personal and usage data is obtained with my consent through forms and cookies. When I give consent to suppliers; I expose myself to my data being passed on to telemarketers for example.
- **My personal data and information need to be kept secure.** This will involve managing my security settings, particularly if using a shared computer, and assigning multiple passwords on different online services to avoid scams.
- **Communities can possess collective knowledge.** Social or professional groups or other collective online activities are often valuable stores of knowledge, experience and information. However, I need to take care that such activities are credible and do not reflect dubious or destructive intentions such as conspiracy theories, 'fake news' or propaganda.

I can:

- Find information through a variety of media.
- Choose the level of information I wish to share on online platforms such as forums.
- Check the level of consent I give for my personal data to be stored, used and shared.
- Create and modify accounts using secure passwords and set up two factor authentication to prevent my accounts being accessed by others.
- Evaluate and use community generated information appropriately.