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Is It Fact or Fiction?

Misinformation is false or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive.

Navigating information online is tricky—even for adults—so how can we approach the topic of misinformation with our preschool and early elementary aged children?

Here are some quick tips for helping children decide if what they are seeing online is fact or fiction:

1. Teach your young child that **not everything they see online is factual** and use plenty of age-appropriate examples.
   - Help them understand reality from make-believe with short videos. For example, you might show them a video of someone's cat falling from the kitchen counter and another video of an animated, talking cat. Both can make us laugh, but one was created for the camera and the other happened naturally in front of the camera.
   - Help them understand facts and opinions with a book like *Facts vs. Opinions vs. Robots* by Michael Rex and then practice identifying facts and opinions in the media they consume.
   - Show your child how easy it is to create made up content for the internet. Film yourselves 'pretending' to be two other people and then watch it back again.

2. Teach your children that there are **MANY purposes for information online.** Sometimes the purpose is to inform or teach, but other times, the purpose might be to sell, entertain, or inspire. Help your children identify and name real examples of media created for different purposes.

3. Teach your children to check in with the "3 Gs": their Gut, with Google, and with their Guides.
   - Our **gut instincts** are important. If we see something online that doesn't feel true, it may not be. If we are unsure, we can proceed to the next step: an internet search.
   - Teach your child how to Google information they are unsure about on **Google's kid-friendly platform, Kiddle.co** and scan the results for answers.
   - If your child is still unsure if what they are seeing or reading is true, they should consult with their **guides**. These guides can be older siblings, parents, caregivers, or teachers.

The best ways you can help your young child navigate information online is by consuming media with them as much as possible, modeling your thinking process for them when you come across something you are unsure of online, and continuing to invite them into conversations about their digital lives.

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