

# Truth and Lies in Social Media - Honesty

## EXPLANATION:

Honesty and integrity are valuable and necessary skills to flourish and succeed in life. But how honest is social media? This activity promotes a critical review of social media and an investigation of the false or misleading information that can be found on various platforms.

**GRADE LEVELS:** 11–12

**STUDENT GROUPING:** Group discussion and media searches conducted in pairs

**ACTIVITY LENGTH:** 30–40 minutes

## CASEL CORE COMPETENCY: *RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING*

- Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts
- Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school
- Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts
- You can learn more about the CASEL framework [here](#)

## SCOPE OF TASK:

There are both pros and cons of social media use for teens. Positives include social interaction and an outlet for creativity. It can also provide entertainment and educational benefits. Negatives associated with social media include cyberbullying, addictiveness, and the fact that it can be a platform for predators. Differentiating between authentic posts and untruthful posts is also sometimes very difficult. Many people have been misled by manipulative posts and advertising on social media.

1. Begin a conversation with students about social media. Questions to gain understanding about their experiences and usage could include:
  - Who uses social media?
  - What platforms do you use? (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)
  - How often do you use social media?
  - What do you use social media for?
2. Tell the students that the focus of today's investigation is about the accuracy of the information we are exposed to. More specifically—how honest are people on social media sites?
3. Ask students why they think people lie or misrepresent things on social media. Some responses could include:
  - People directly lie about their lives to present a certain version of reality.
  - People are trying to sell something.
  - Photos are photoshopped to create a different reality.
4. Ask the students how dishonest posts on social media affects us. Some responses may include:
  - Creates doubt because we trusted something someone said
  - Affects self-esteem due to comparison with others
  - Impacts our connections with others
  - Changes our perception of reality
5. Ask the students how they can determine what is true and what is false on social media. Discuss how they decide what to believe on social media.



6. After the students have shared their knowledge and experiences, provide the details of their task:
  - **Important Note:** Make sure to provide guidelines about appropriate Internet usage in the school context.
  - In pairs, students are to go onto a social media site and find an example of one dishonest post. Examples could include dishonest or unethical advertising.
  - If social media cannot be accessed at the school location, search for similar examples on the Internet.
7. Give the students 10 minutes to find a misleading post on social media.
8. Bring students back to the group to share what they found. Reflect on how they knew the post was dishonest:
  - What did you find?
  - How did you know it was dishonest—the text, the visuals?
  - Did you want to believe it? Why or why not?
9. In conclusion, ask students how it makes them feel when they see these types of posts. How do they counteract what they see on social media, and what coping mechanisms do they have?

**When engaging with social media, it is critical to remind yourself that what you see is not always an accurate picture of reality. Comparisons with others are not healthy.**

## **RESOURCES:**

For more research-based information, see: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/naked-truth/201807/how-honest-are-people-social-media>