



Think like a journalist

Course with essential journalistic tools to identify disinformation

University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU), Iberika, Stimmuli, CESIE, X Liceum, Maldita.es



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Module 1: Learn how to identify and check sources of information

Learning outcomes:

- Associate topics with documentary sources
- Rigorously evaluates the reliability and quality of sources
- Searches for, selects, and retrieves sources
- Seeks alternative sources
- Understands the importance of specialized products
- Works in teams to gather information
- Reconstructs information and arguments from different sources
- Assesses various content curation tools
- Applies social systems

INTRODUCTION

Sources of information in the journalistic world

In a digital ecosystem where anyone can create, disseminate, and share content, it's crucial to carefully consider the source of information before granting it credibility. Without a legitimate source, any information may lack value. For example, if someone shares an interesting piece of information with you, it's likely that before believing it, you'd want to know where that information came from, right? This is because the reliability of the person telling you the story can influence the likelihood of its truth.

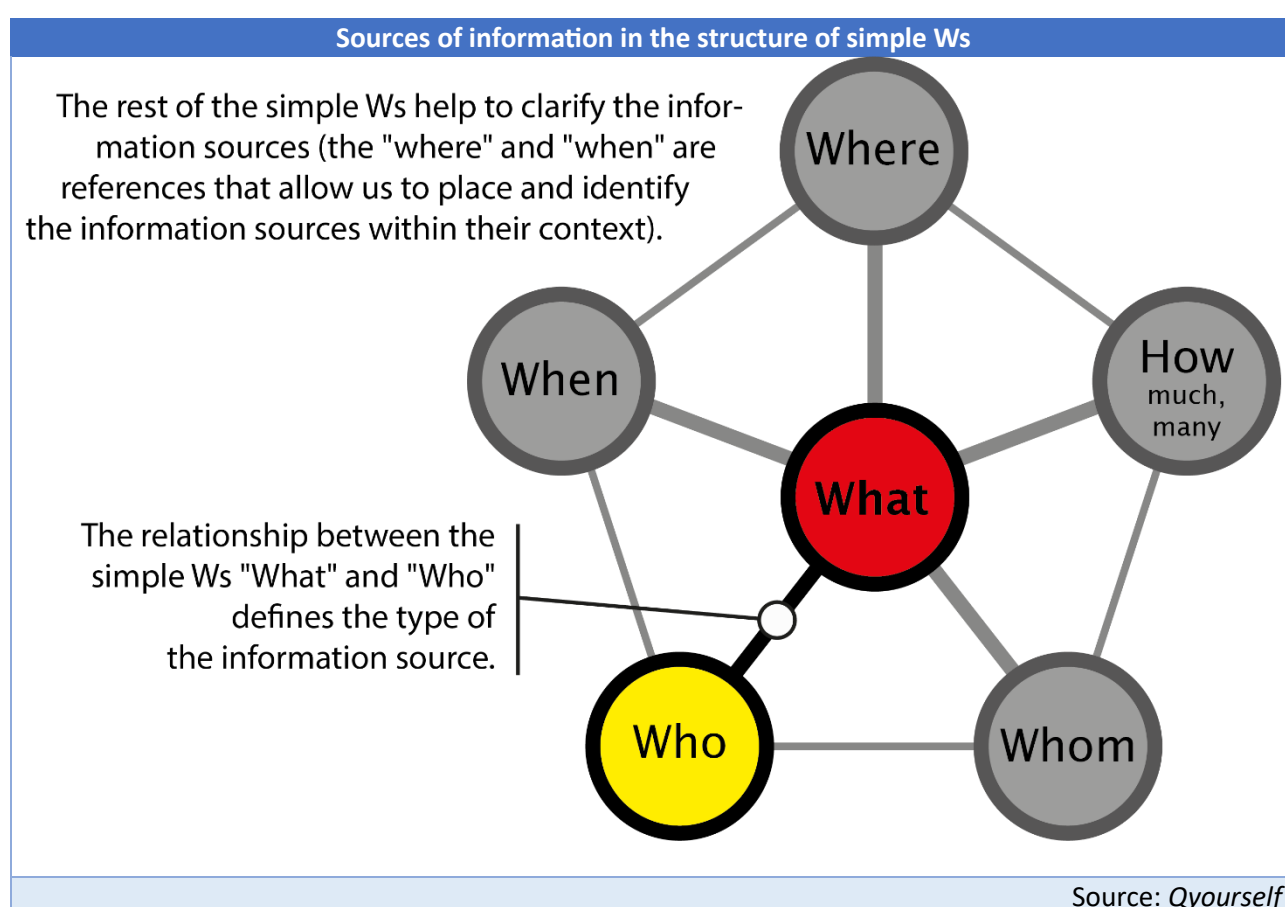
That's why it's important to verify the origin of seemingly informative content before drawing any conclusions. This leads to a question: Who is the provider of the information, and what are their sources? The Internet is full of stories, some true and others not. Paying attention to their origin is important because the credibility of a source often determines the reliability of the information presented. The authority and credibility of information are established by the credentials of the author and the publication. Therefore, the quality of information may vary depending on the source's reliability. This is why learning to identify and verify sources is important for assessing the quality and rigor of information.

In journalism, **sources of information** are the origin of news. They include people, documents, publications, or institutions that provide data, testimonies, facts, or knowledge that journalists use to build information. Journalists must cite these sources accurately so that the audience can identify them and assess their credibility within the context of that information. Sources are essential for ensuring the truthfulness, accuracy, and depth of the information conveyed to the public. They also allow for corroborating, contextualizing, and expanding the coverage of events, helping journalists avoid speculation or inaccuracies.

One of the primary tasks of a journalist is to ensure that the information they publish is truthful. In this process, it's essential to know how to properly identify and use information sources. Source **verification** is the fundamental pillar upon which the credibility of any informative message is built, especially in journalism, where rigorous verification of data and sources guarantees its truthfulness. This is also an act of ethical responsibility and a defence against propaganda and manipulation. Without this necessary process, information becomes mere speculation.

The "who" & "what" pair

Among all the simple 5Ws that can be found in a text, the "who" & "what" pair corresponds to the sources. The relationship between these two simple Ws will determine the nature of the source. By focusing on this relationship, we can classify the source we are dealing with.



Typifying sources of information

We present a **classification** to help you identify and evaluate sources of information, considering not only their proximity to the facts (primary or secondary) but also their legitimacy (authorized or not), as well as their relevance and appropriateness in relation to the topic addressed by the information:

Classification of information sources	
• Lacks Sources:	Information presented without any reference or supporting evidence. <i>Example: A message that circulates with no indication of who said it or where it came from.</i>
• Unknown Sources:	Sources that are unidentified, either due to anonymity or lack of clear mention. <i>Example: "Statistics show that..." without specifying the source or offering additional proof</i>
• Personal / Documentary sources	Personal: Individuals providing information based on their direct experience, testimony, or knowledge. <i>Example: An interview with a technology expert.</i> Documentary: Documents or records containing formalized, archived information. <i>Example: An academic study or a statistical report.</i>
• Organizational / Non-organizational sources	Organizational: Sources originating from institutions or organized entities issuing information officially. <i>Example: A press release from a ministry or a company</i> Non-organizational (particular): Personal sources, meaning people offering their knowledge or personal experience. <i>Example: A business owner discussing the impact of a law on their company.</i>
• Primary / Secondary sources	Primary: Direct sources or eyewitnesses of events, or original documents that serve as a foundation. <i>Example: An eyewitness to an accident or an official government document.</i> Secondary: Sources that interpret, comment on, or summarize information from primary sources. <i>Example: An opinion article analyzing the results of scientific research.</i>
• Authorized / Unauthorized sources	Authorized: Sources with the expertise and legitimacy to speak on the topic due to their experience, knowledge, or position. <i>Example: An epidemiologist discussing a pandemic.</i> Unauthorized: Sources lacking sufficient training, experience, or authority on the topic they address. <i>Example: An influencer without medical knowledge talking about vaccine effects.</i>
• Relevant / Irrelevant sources	Relevant: Sources that provide key information directly related to the topic in question. <i>Example: An official economic report in a news piece about a financial crisis.</i> Irrelevant: Sources that do not provide directly connected or useful information on the topic discussed. <i>Example: A general comment on international politics in an article on the local economy.</i>

• Pertinent / Non-Pertinent sources

Pertinent: Sources that are appropriate and align with the context and focus of the news or topic discussed.

Example: A historian specializing in historical conflicts in a report on international diplomacy.

Non-Pertinent: Sources that may be vaguely connected to the topic but do not provide useful or suitable information for the context.

Example: A musician giving opinions on energy policies without direct connection to the topic at hand.

The impact of unknown sources

If we encounter unknown, nonexistent, or unclear sources, almost all the typologies from the previous section cannot be verified or precisely identified. Thus, even though we might assume a source is, for example, organizational and relevant because it refers to a document published by the UN regarding an armed conflict, if that document is not clearly identified, no matter how authorized, relevant, or pertinent it seems, it will not be. If this document is not accessible because it is not clearly identified, its relevance and pertinence will always be speculative, as they cannot be demonstrated.

EXERCISES

Selecting sources of information

On many occasions, we tend to search for the source of any kind of information based on excessively limited criteria. How many times do we end up asking the same person about something, out of laziness, because we trust them, or because we consider them to be intelligent, without them necessarily being an expert on the topic we're asking about?

There is nothing wrong with turning to a source to try to find the answer to a problem, or to get informed, but we must keep in mind that reality is much more complex and diverse. We must be aware that the appropriate sources for a piece of information may be others, and that, in many cases, there can be many different and varied sources.

Classifying information sources

As mentioned earlier, an unknown or imprecise source will prevent many of the classifications from being clearly identified. In any case, it is advisable to make an attempt to approach them (try to identify them), although it is very important not to take them for granted. For this reason, in the solved exercises, these classifications are marked in red.

On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that these "deficient" sources do not necessarily have to be false; they simply do not provide the necessary information for us to identify them. While we may speculate about their truthfulness, we must adopt a critical (skeptical, distrustful) attitude toward them.

Finally, it is also necessary to observe the sources within their context: a sentence in the text may not identify the source properly, but that same source may be clearly identified in another part of the same text.

Practical exercises


Exercise 1: Identifying different sources of information (1)

Identify three sources to obtain information on the following topics:

- Adolescence
- Effects of tobacco
- Anxiety

Debate and discuss briefly the sources selected and the reasons behind their selection. For example, the proximity of the student to the selected source, the formality of the source, the authority or expertise of the source, the possible selection of journalistic media or social networks... Additionally, observe and discuss which sources are most repeated among the selected ones.

Exercise 2.1: Classifying information sources (1)



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Presented a document for the treatment of smokers

Many still refer to smoking as a “habit.” This diminishes its true importance: it is a disease, and as such, it should be treated.

To address this, a document was presented this week with the aim of ensuring that anyone who wants to quit smoking receives healthcare support.

The idea is to identify the millions of smokers in Spain and offer them help to combat the leading cause of preventable premature death. Thousands of people die in Spain due to tobacco, and millions more around the world.

Classification table	
Source	Type
Presented a document	Unknown Documentary Primary Unauthorized Irrelevant Non pertinent
Many still refer to smoking as a “habit”:	Unknown Peronal Non-organizational (particular) Unauthorized Irrelevant Non pertinent
A document was presented	Unknown Documentary Primary Unauthorized Irrelevant Non pertinent
...	More elementary or basic Qs, if necessary

Source: Qyourself

Exercise 2.2: Classifying information sources (2)



INTERNACIONAL OPINIÓN ESPAÑA ECONOMÍA SOCIEDAD MEDIO AMBIENTE CIENCIA SALUD TECNOLOGÍA CULTURA DEPORTES GENTE BABELIA EL PAÍS SEMANAL **EL PAÍS EXPRES**

Healthcare experts present a document to ensure that smoking treatment is homogeneous and science-based

Many doctors still refer to smoking as a "habit." According to Rábade, this diminishes its true importance: "it is a disease, and it should be treated as such."

To address this, a group of experts—including family doctors, pulmonologists, and pharmacists—presented a document this week at a medical conference in Bilbao. The aim of the document is to ensure that anyone who wants to quit smoking receives healthcare support using the best tools proven to be scientifically effective.

The idea is that, through professionals at all levels of care—from pharmacies to hospitals—the approximately six million smokers in Spain—according to the latest European survey—can be identified and offered help to combat the leading cause of preventable premature death. Each year, 50,000 people die in Spain due to tobacco, and eight million worldwide, according to the WHO.

Classification table

Source	Type
Healthcare experts present a document	Unknown Documentary Non-organizational (particular) Authorized Relevant Pertinent
Many doctors still refer to smoking as a "habit"	Unknown Personal Non-organizational (particular) Authorized Relevant Pertinent
According to Rábade	Unknown Personal Non-organizational (particular) Primary Unauthorized Irrelevant Non pertinent
Group of experts: family doctors, pulmonologists, pharmacists	Unknown Personal Non-organizational (particular) Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent
Document presented at a medical Conference	Unknown Documentary Organizational Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent
European survey	Unknown Documentary Organizational Primary Unauthorized Relevant Pertinent
World Health Organization (WHO)	Personal Organizational Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent
...	More elementary or basic Qs, if necessary

Source: Qyourself






Exercise 2.3: Classifying information sources (3)

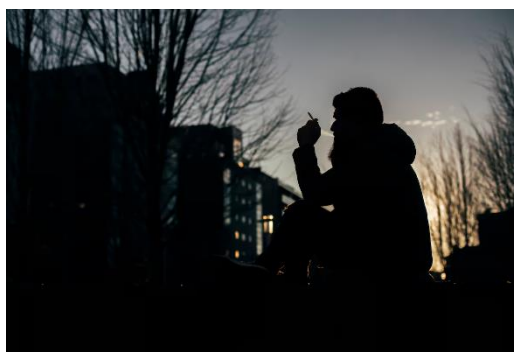
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The Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians presents an expert document to ensure that smoking treatment is homogeneous and science-based

Pablo Linde

EL PAÍS | Bilbao - 05 OCT 2024 - 05:30 CEST     



A person smokes a cigarette in a park in Santiago de Compostela | Óscar Corral

Many doctors still refer to smoking as a “habit.” According to pulmonologist Carlos Rábade, this diminishes its true importance: “it is a disease, and as such, it should be treated.”

To address this, a group of experts—including family doctors, pulmonologists, and pharmacists—presented a document this week at the [National Congress of the Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians \(Semergen\)](#) in Bilbao. This document aims to ensure that anyone who wants to quit smoking receives healthcare support using the best tools proven to be scientifically effective.

The idea is that through professionals at all levels of care—from pharmacies to hospitals—the approximately six million smokers in Spain—according to the latest [European Health Survey from 2020](#)—can be identified and offered help to combat the leading cause of preventable premature death. Each year, 50,000 people die in Spain due to tobacco, and eight million worldwide, [according to the WHO](#).

Classification table

Source	Type
<i>The Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians presents an expert document:</i>	Documentary Organizational Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent

Many doctors [...] refer to smoking as a "habit":	Unknown Personal Non-organizational (particular) Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent
Carlos Rábade (pulmonologist)...	Personal Non-organizational (particular) Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent
Group of experts: family doctors, pulmonologists, pharmacists	Unknown Personal Non-organizational (particular) Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent
Document (presented at the National Congress of the Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians (SEMERGEN))	Documentary Organizational Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent
Latest European Health Survey from 2020	Documentary Organizational Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent
World Health Organization (WHO)	Documentary Organizational Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent
...	<i>More elementary or basic Qs, if necessary</i>
Source: El País, October 5, 2024 & <i>Qyourself</i>	

Exercise 4: Identifying different sources of information (2)

Identify three sources to obtain information on the following topics:

- Adolescence
- Effects of tobacco
- Anxiety

Evaluate the relevance of the information sources you selected in exercise 1 based on what you have learned so far.

HITS & TIPS

How to do the exercises (suggestions)

The exercises can be completed using the tables (some examples have been included on these pages). They can also be done by hand, underlining and noting what is considered appropriate within the exercise texts. Below is an example of how the exercise could be done, underlining the *Who* & *What*- elementary Qs, and marking the information sources.

Example: Classifying information sources

Underlining *Who* [yellow] & *What* [red]

The Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians presents an expert document to ensure that smoking treatment is homogeneous and science-based


EL PAÍS / BILBAO, 5/10/2024

Many doctors still refer to smoking as a "habit." According to pulmonologist Carlos Rábade, this diminishes its true importance: "it is a disease, and as such, it should be treated."

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The idea is that through professionals at all levels of care—from pharmacies to hospitals—the approximately six million smokers in Spain—according to the latest European Health Survey from 2020—can be identified and offered help to combat the leading cause of preventable premature death. Each year, 50,000 people die in Spain due to tobacco, and eight million worldwide, according to the WHO.

Marking the information sources



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The Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians presents an expert document to ensure that smoking treatment is homogeneous and science-based


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Underlining *Who* & *What*, and marking the information sources



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World Health Organization (WHO)	Documentary Organizational Primary Authorized Relevant Pertinent

Source: [El País, October 5, 2024](#) & Qyourself

Module 2: elements of information

Learning outcomes:

- Apply theoretical knowledge to concrete cases
- Assesses the informational elements of a text
- Learn about the strengths and weaknesses of news products in W
- Understands the importance of specialized products
- Hierarchise and prioritise web information
- Consume texts critically

INTRODUCTION

Structuring information: the journalistic method

The phases involved in creating a text can be considerably complex, but both teaching methodology and professional experience recommend organizing ideas and presenting them based on a series of very simple principles. One of the first challenges any student must face is how to communicate anything clearly, precisely, and concretely.

One of the first lessons learned is to mentally organize all types of news information around **six fundamental questions**: *what* happened, *who* is involved, *when* it happened, *where* it happened, *why* it happened, and *how* it happened.

The so-called **five Ws** (*What, Who, When, Where, and Why*) —though there have always been six questions, with the last starting with H: *How*— do not originate from journalism. In fact, they are the foundations on which knowledge rests.

Their origin can be traced back to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. These seemingly simple questions were later applied by rhetoricians such as Quintilian and Cicero as a valid method for structuring a speech.

The technique of the five Ws has been one of the cornerstones of journalistic writing since its inception, and both they and their variations, clarifications, and extensions like "*For what*" and "*How much/many*" are implicitly or explicitly found in all journalistic writing manuals.

The original 5Ws+1 in journalism

• What:	Refers to the events, actions, and ideas that the news will inform about.
• Who:	Includes the protagonists, their antagonists, and ultimately all characters appearing in the news.
• When:	Places the action in a specific time, indicating its beginning, duration, and end.
• Where:	Defines the space in which the events unfold.

• Why:	Explains to the audience the reasons behind the event, its background, etc. It often introduces elements of evaluation that go beyond mere description of events.
• How:	Describes the circumstances and modalities surrounding the events.

The basic structure of information: Simple or Elemental Ws

Among all the Ws we may encounter, we can clearly distinguish two differentiated groups: **simple or elemental Ws** and **complex or relational Ws**.

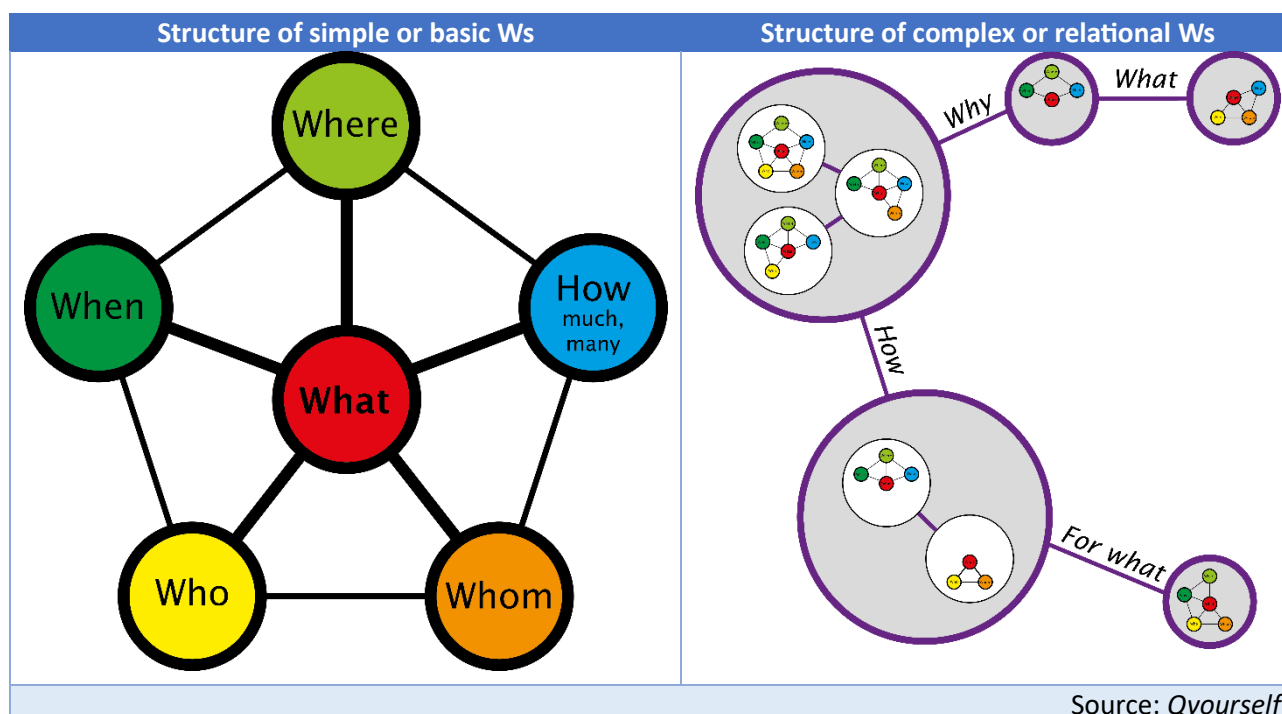
When we talk about simple Ws, we refer to Who, When, Where, How much-many, and What. The first four have a very distinct lexical form in the text, and although traditionally only one Who is mentioned, this W encompasses two fundamental elements: Who and Whom. The quantity marker How much (How much or How many) can be added to these.

Continuing with the elemental Ws, we understand What as a mixed W: it can be part of the simple elements or the compound ones. The simple What represents the core question of the act of communication, and there are few exceptions where this question does not revolve around the verb. News talks about facts, events, and the verb is their starting point, occupying the central position in the fundamental structure of the Ws.

The levels of structures: Complex or Relational Ws

Unlike the elemental Ws, the questions **How**, **Why**, **For what** (purpose), and occasionally **What** do not have a structure of their own. Actually, they consist of one or more fundamental related structures, and How, Why, For what, and some What (or To what) are simply the relationships established among them, which give semantic meaning to the text.

In contrast to the fundamental structures, the relational Ws vary in each case, and the same fundamental What can have a completely different relational structure. Turning something as complex as this into a series of measurable, objective, and classifiable rules is no easy task. In fact, the number of levels of relational structures, from the simplest —located at the syntagmatic level— to the most complex —at the level of the informative piece— can become overwhelming unless strict rules are established to determine these relationships and their levels of dependence. However, merely identifying them would be a considerable achievement.



We can adapt the classic Ws to the questions that anyone should ask to determine whether the received information is properly structured, if it lacks any essential information, or if the content is clearly identified, we can ask ourselves **six basic questions (5 Qs)**, and then move on to **four relational questions (4 Qs)**.

EXERCISES

Identification of Simple or Elemental Ws

The best way to identify the elemental Ws is to rely on their syntactic markers. That is, to perform a morphosyntactic analysis of each sentence. However, this can be complicated for certain groups. Therefore, —honoring the name of the project: **QYourself**— this phase can be substituted by asking about the **elemental Qs** in each sentence.

The Simple or Elemental Questions	
• What:	Involves the events, actions, and ideas being reported.
• Who:	Refers to all the characters appearing in the news.
• Whom:	Indicates who is affected by the content.
• When:	Places the action in a specific time.
• Where:	Defines the space where the events take place.
• How much/many:	Indicates the quantity or quantities of the elements being reported.
Source: <i>Qyourself</i>	

This method is by no means the most exhaustive, and it can lead to misunderstandings by overlapping, repeating, or mixing possible answers. However, it is simpler than resorting to a morphosyntactic analysis.

Example: Search for elementary Q's	
“According to the World Health Organization (WHO), smoking is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the world, responsible for more than 8 million deaths each year”	
What:	smoking (is one of the leading causes of preventable death)
Who:	the World Health Organization (WHO)
Whom:	---
When:	each year
Where:	in the world
How much/many:	more than 8 million
...	More elementary or basic Qs, if necessary
Source: El País, september 17, 2024 & <i>Qyourself</i>	

Presence / absence of Ws

Not all sentences need to answer all Qs, but it is a relatively simple way to become aware of the accuracy of the responses or the absence of important information in the text. In the case of such absence, one should ask whether the response is relevant —whether that data necessarily needs to exist— if it can be found elsewhere in the text, or if it simply does not exist.

Authorized / unauthorized sources

Deconstructing a sentence through the elemental Qs also helps to more clearly **identify the sources** of information. Although questions may arise regarding their placement —if sources are usually found in the response to the question **Who**, what happens when, for example, a document or report is mentioned? Should it respond to **Who** or **What**? (these doubts would be clearly addressed through morphosyntactic analysis)—

In any case, by highlighting the source and isolating it from the rest of the text, issues related to its nature, accuracy, relevance, or accessibility to the original content, if any, can be more easily addressed.

Identification and hierarchization of complex Ws

This last section corresponds to the identification and classification of complex Ws. It may seem excessive for a first approach to media literacy, but asking questions again —in this case, answering the questions *What (complex)*, *How*, *For what (purpose)*, or *Why*— can aid in understanding the entire text.

The presence of one or more relational Qs indicates that we are dealing with a complex syntactic structure in which two or more groups of simple Qs are related, called ‘conjuncts’ or ‘conjoins’. The totality of the coordinators and coordinated elements forming an instance of coordination is called a coordinate structure.”

The The complex or relational Questions:	
• What (complex):	Is a sum or sequence of events or actions.
• For what purpose:	Is the ultimate goal and the purpose of an action.
• Why	Are the reasons why an event has occurred.
• How:	Are the circumstances in which the events unfold.
Source: Qyourself	

Once again, the morphosyntactic analysis of a text is the most thorough way to identify and establish the relationships of these types of complex Qs. However, we can also approach them by attempting to answer these four Qs as we read a text.

Example: Search for relational Q's	
“According to the World Health Organization (WHO), smoking is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the world, responsible for more than 8 million deaths each year”	
What:	According to the World Health Organization (WHO)
What:	smoking is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the world
Why:	responsible for more than 8 million deaths each year
For what:	---
How:	---
...	More complex or relational Qs, if necessary
Source: El País, september 17, 2024 & Qyourself	

Depth and complexity of the relational Qs

The identification of complex Qs, which usually correspond to the nominal and/or verbal phrases present in the text, allows for two things: on one hand, it organizes, structures, and hierarchizes the text; on the other hand, it divides the text in a way that makes it easier to undertake the identification of the elemental Qs.

The number, depth, and different groupings of relationships that can occur in a text are typically related to its length. A simple sentence will very rarely have more than one or two relational Qs. Anyway, like the case of the elemental Qs, the presence or absence of complex Qs can be useful to identify the presence or absence of important information for understanding the content.

Practical exercises

We will analyze the Ws present in five texts. The [original source](#) is a news article recently published in a Spanish national newspaper (El País). Based on this text, a series of exercises have been created by removing and/or altering the content.

Tasks
• Identify and isolate (separate) the complex Qs from this text.
• Identify the structure (the simple Qs) of each block of complex Qs.
• Ask yourself about the absence of simple Qs: should they be present or not?
• Question the relevance and accuracy of the simple Qs.
• Mark the sources in the simple Qs and pay special attention to their relevance.

The five proposed practices are presented in order of informational quality: from the most deficient to the original news.

The original content —the news— was much more extensive (it is included at the end), but the exercise is limited to the first three paragraphs to facilitate and simplify the exercises —partly because the texts shared in many digital media, such as social networks, are relatively short—. Obviously, these exercises can be replicated with much longer texts, but the time and effort required can be considerable, and it is more beneficial to start with short texts. As more sections are added to this manual, the analyzed texts will become longer.

The exercises can be carried out as desired. In any case, a blank space has been left in each exercise, and pre-designed tables can be provided if necessary.

Exercise 1:


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EL PAÍS EXPRES

Presented a document for the treatment of smokers

Many still refer to smoking as a “habit.” This diminishes its true importance: it is a disease, and as such, it should be treated.

To address this, a document was presented this week with the aim of ensuring that anyone who wants to quit smoking receives healthcare support.

The idea is to identify the millions of smokers in Spain and offer them help to combat the leading cause of preventable premature death. Thousands of people die in Spain due to tobacco, and millions more around the world.

 Source: *Qyourself*

Exercise 2:


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EL PAÍS EXPRES

A document is presented to ensure that smoking treatment is homogeneous and science-based

Many doctors still refer to smoking as a “habit.” According to an expert, this downplays its true significance. Smoking is “a disease, and it should be treated as such.”

To achieve this, a document was presented this week in Bilbao, aiming to ensure that anyone who wants to quit smoking receives healthcare support using the best tools proven to be scientifically effective.

The goal is that through professionals at all levels of care—from pharmacies to hospitals—the approximately six million smokers in Spain can be identified and offered help to combat the leading cause of preventable premature death. Each year, 50,000 people die in Spain due to tobacco, and eight million worldwide.

 Source: *Qyourself*


Erasmus+: Key Action 2, Cooperation partnerships in adult education.

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Project Number: 2023-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000153626

Exercise 3:


EL PAÍS
EL PERIÓDICO GLOBAL
INTERNACIONAL OPINIÓN ESPAÑA ECONOMÍA SOCIEDAD MEDIO AMBIENTE CIENCIA SALUD TECNOLOGÍA CULTURA DEPORTES GENTE BABELIA EL PAÍS SEMANAL
EL PAÍS EXPRES

Healthcare experts present a document to ensure that smoking treatment is homogeneous and science-based

Many doctors still refer to smoking as a "habit." According to Rábade, this diminishes its true importance: "it is a disease, and it should be treated as such."

To address this, a group of experts—including family doctors, pulmonologists, and pharmacists—presented a document this week at a medical conference in Bilbao. The aim of the document is to ensure that anyone who wants to quit smoking receives healthcare support using the best tools proven to be scientifically effective.

The idea is that, through professionals at all levels of care—from pharmacies to hospitals—the approximately six million smokers in Spain—according to the latest European survey—can be identified and offered help to combat the leading cause of preventable premature death. Each year, 50,000 people die in Spain due to tobacco, and eight million worldwide, according to the WHO.

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Exercise 4:


EL PAÍS
 EL PERIÓDICO GLOBAL

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EL PAÍS EXPRES

The Spanish Society of Primary Care Physicians presents an expert document to ensure that smoking treatment is homogeneous and science-based

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Source: Qyourself

Exercise 5:


EL PAÍS
 EL PERIÓDICO GLOBAL

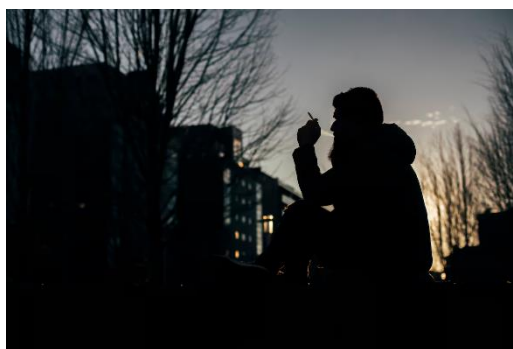
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EL PAÍS EXPRES

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Pablo Linde

EL PAÍS | Bilbao - 05 OCT 2024 - 05:30 CEST



A person smokes a cigarette in a park in Santiago de Compostela | Óscar Corral

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 Source: [El País, October 5, 2024](#) & [Qyourself](#)


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HITS & TIPS

How to Do the Exercises (suggestions)

The exercises can be completed using the tables (some examples have been included on these pages, and there is also a blank table at the end of the document). They can also be done by hand, underlining and noting what is considered appropriate within the exercise texts. Below is an example of how the exercise could be done, marking the elementary Qs.

Examples

Original text



INTERNACIONAL

OPINIÓN

ESPAÑA

ECONOMÍA

SOCIEDAD

MEDIO AMBIENTE

CIENCIA

SALUD

TECNOLOGÍA

CULTURA

DEPORTES

GENTE

BABELIA

EL PAÍS SEMANAL

EL PAÍS EXPRES

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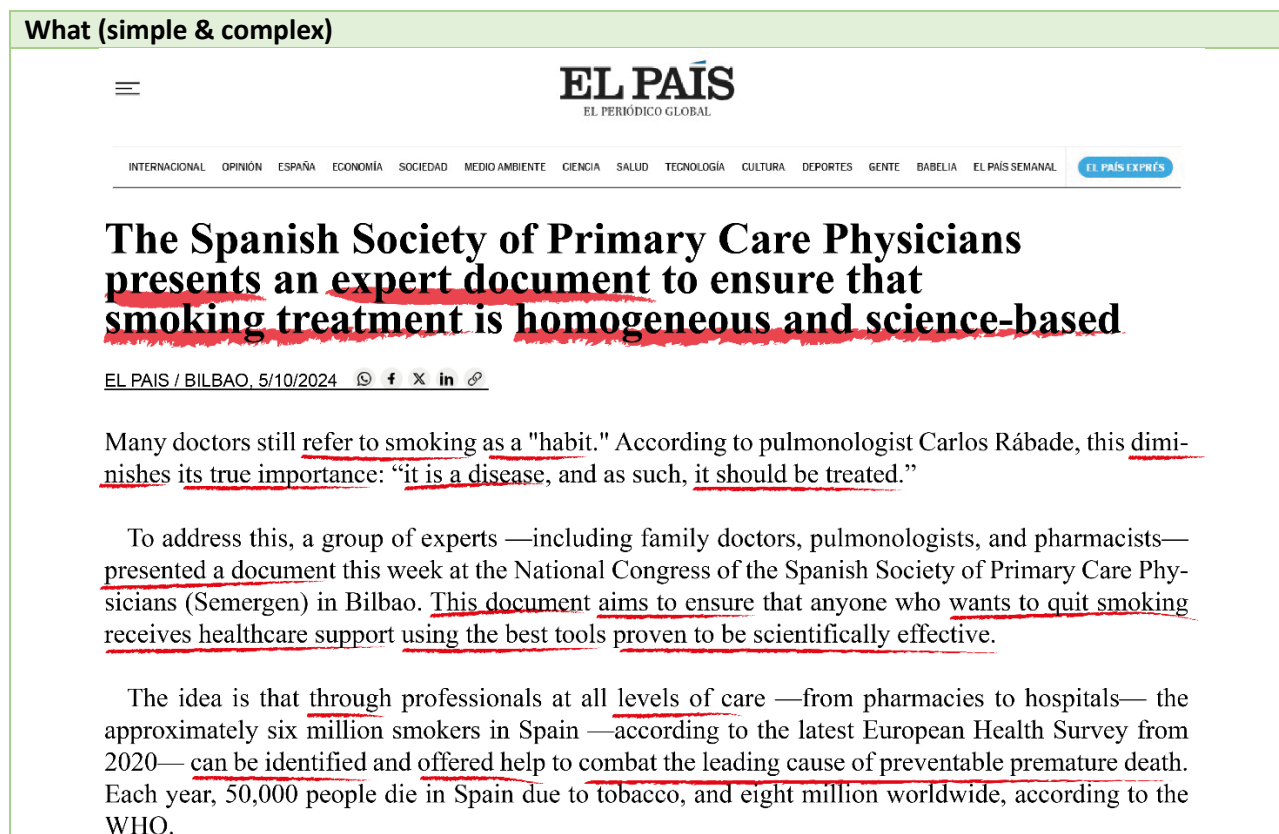
EL PAÍS / BILBAO, 5/10/2024

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What (simple & complex)



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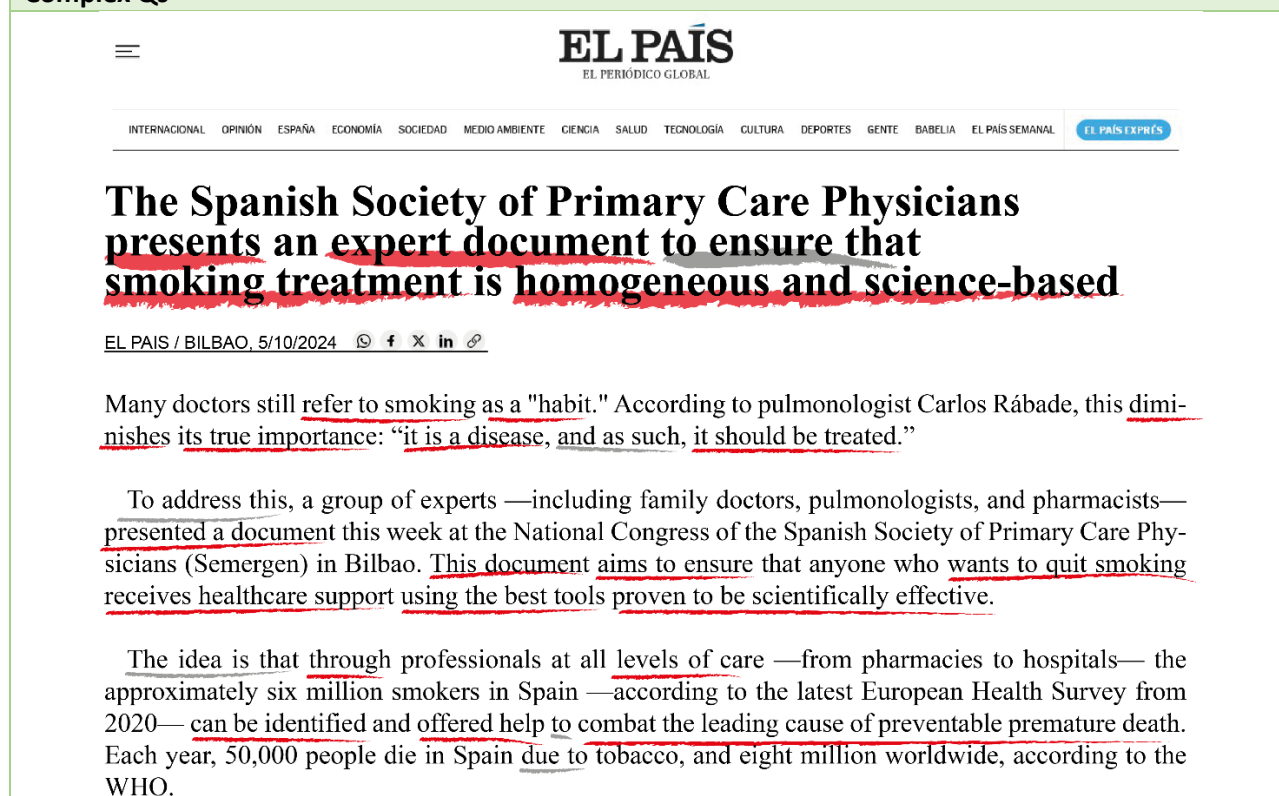
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Complex Qs



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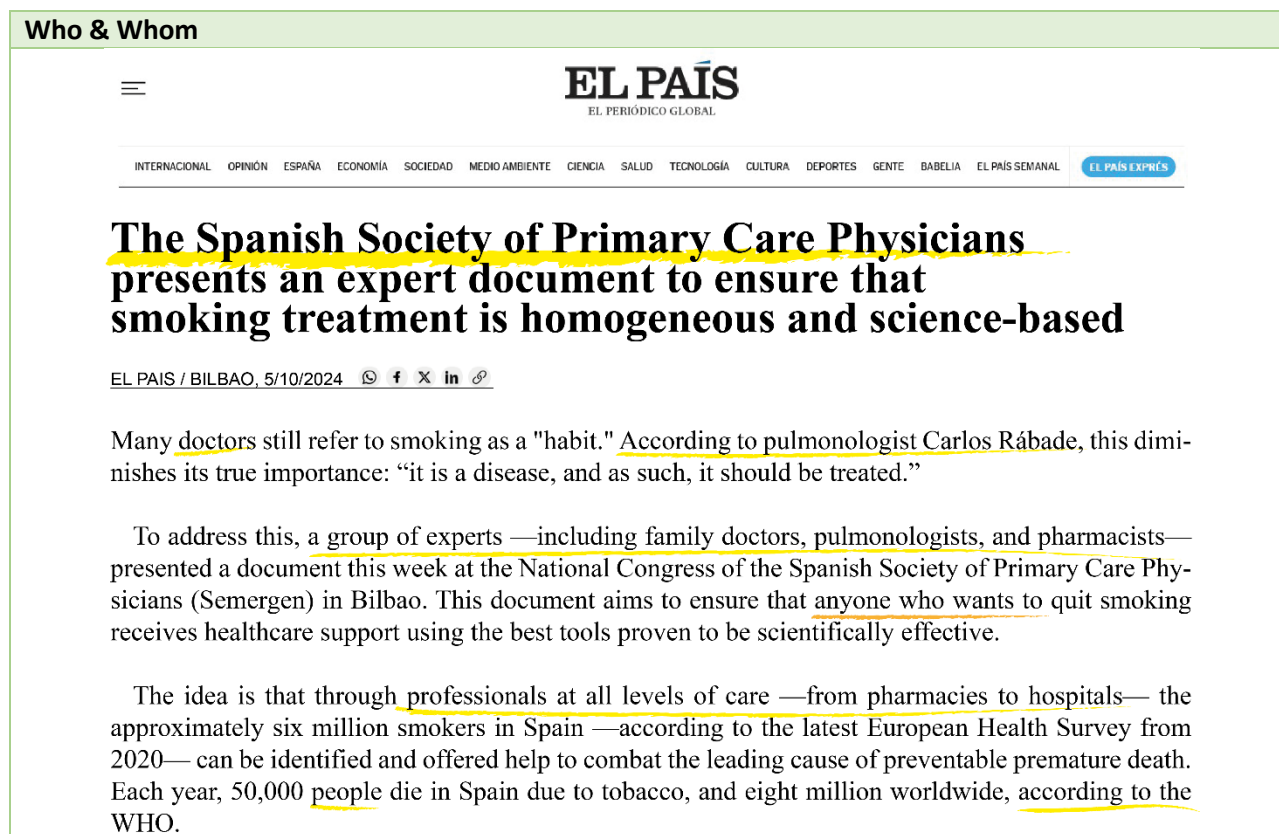
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Who & Whom



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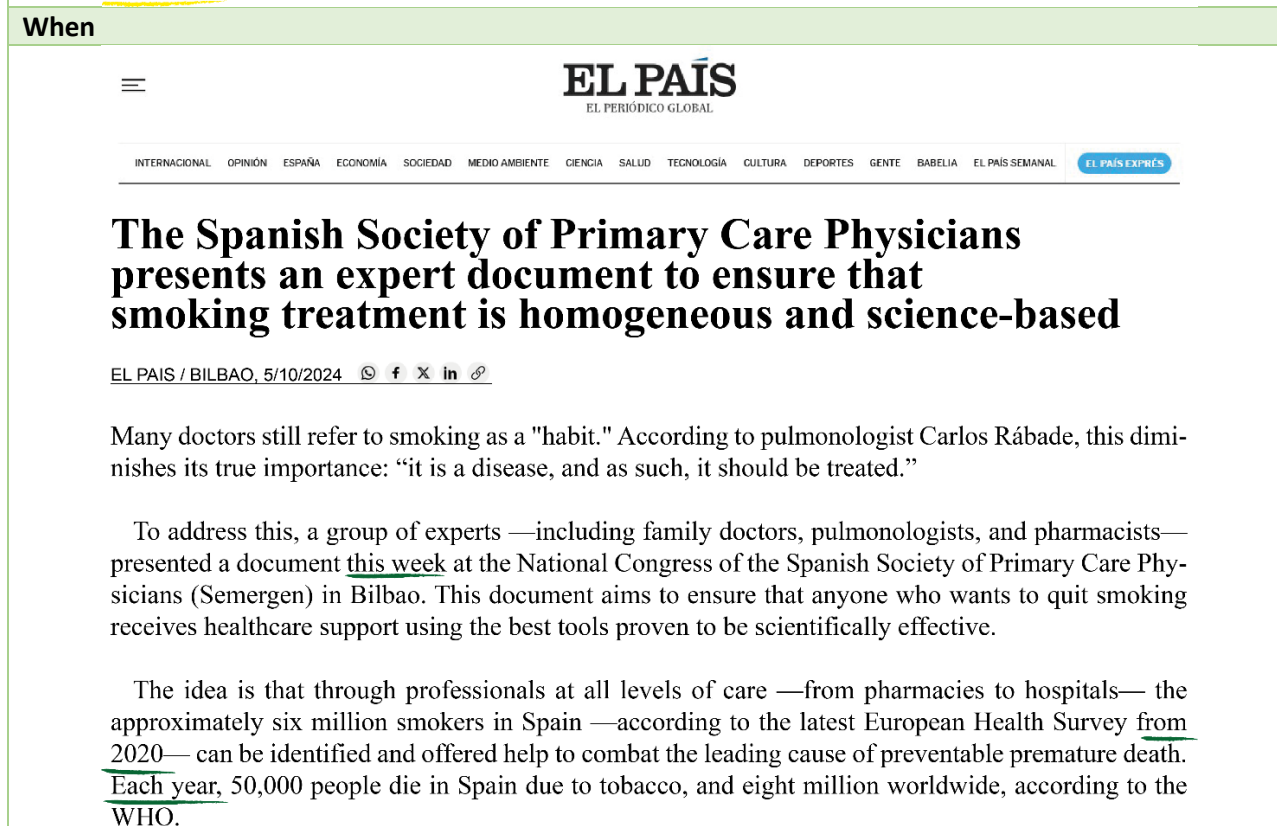
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When



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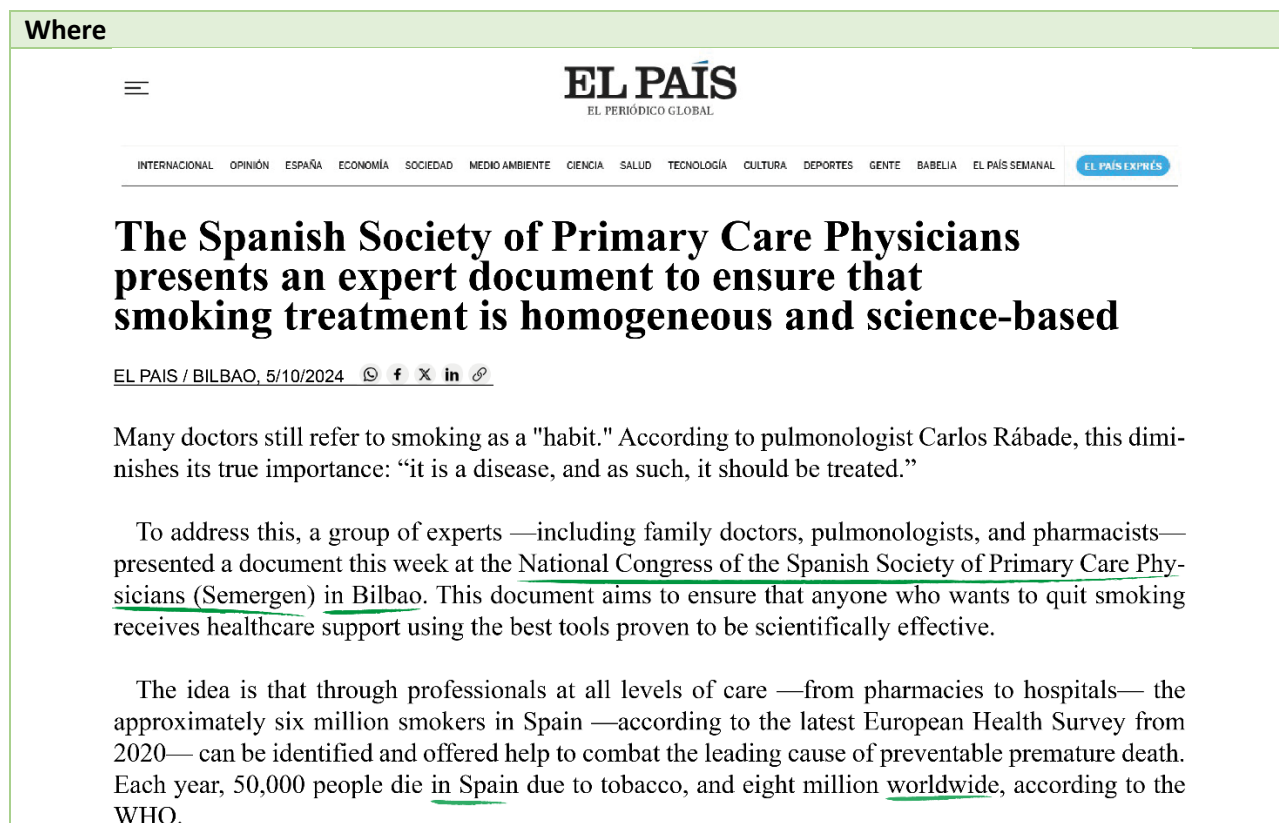
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Where



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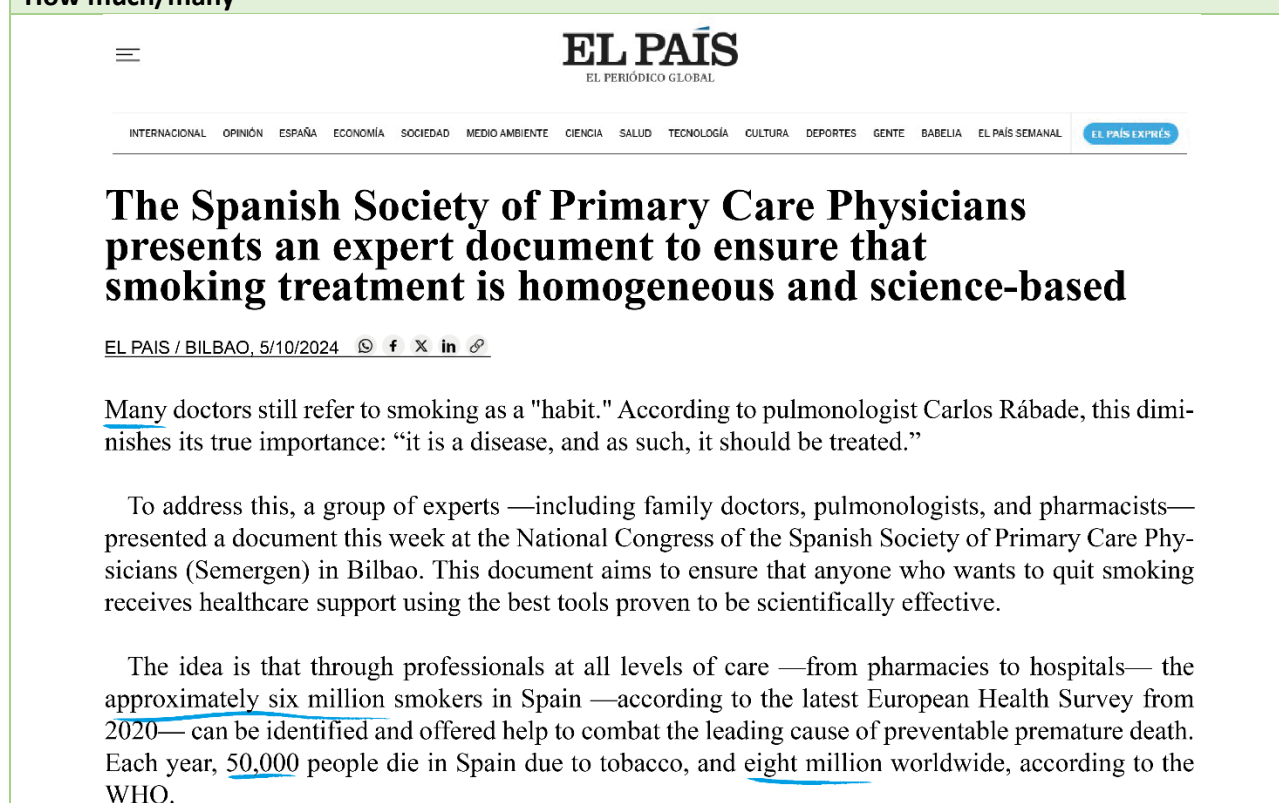
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How much/many



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Complete exercise



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In any case, the choice of the most appropriate method for carrying out the exercises is at the discretion of the teacher.

How to Prepare the Exercises (suggestions)

In this case, the exercises were prepared using a real news article published in a national newspaper as a reference. The original text (included in this document) was reduced to three paragraphs (exercise 5), and for the subsequent exercises, the most important elements (the basic Qs) were gradually removed and manipulated, making the text increasingly less precise.

Preparing the Exercises with ChatGPT

There is, however, another way to prepare the exercises, using tools like ChatGPT. Below are some prompts we have tested, which may be helpful for creating the exercises. The prompts are marked in brackets.

Prompts that can be used to write and alter a news article
[Can you write an informative text about topic X?]
[Can you shorten/expand it?]
[Can you remove the sources of information?]
[Can you rewrite the text highlighting Y?]
[Can you remove references to Z?]
[Can you simplify/make the writing much more complex?]
[Can you change the meaning of the text?]
[Can you add/remove evaluative elements to the text?]

[Can you alter the meaning of the original text, making it much more imprecise?]
Experts Present a Document for Smokers Although some doctors still consider smoking a "habit," others see it as a disease that requires treatment. A group of experts presented a document at a medical conference, proposing that the treatment for quitting smoking be more consistent. The presented plan aims to identify and help smokers. It was also mentioned that smoking is a major cause of deaths, both in Spain and worldwide, according to the WHO.
Observations It is always advisable to alter the text generated by ChatGPT. In this case, certain information has been removed, and some sentences have been rephrased to make the imprecision much more evident.

On the other hand, this tool can be useful if the goal is to create imprecisions, but it is not as efficient (in fact, it performs quite poorly) when trying to gain precision. For this reason, although it can also be used to create a text from scratch, we recommend using it to alter an already written text (from a newspaper, for example).

Appendices

Original text

Cómo dejar de fumar desde el centro de salud: “El tabaquismo es una enfermedad como otra cualquiera, y hay que tratarla”

La Sociedad Española de Médicos de Atención Primaria presenta un documento de expertos para que el tratamiento a los fumadores sea homogéneo y basado en la ciencia

Pablo Linde

EL PAIS | Bilbao - 05 OCT 2024 - 05:30 CEST

Muchos médicos siguen refiriéndose a fumar como “hábito” y a [dejarlo como “deshabitación tabáquica”](#). Esto le quita, en opinión del neumólogo Carlos Rábade, la importancia que realmente tiene: “Una enfermedad como otra cualquiera, y que como tal debe ser tratada”. Para lograrlo, un grupo de expertos —médicos de familia, neumólogos, farmacéuticos— ha presentado esta semana un documento de consenso en el congreso nacional de la Sociedad Española de Médicos de Atención Primaria (Semergen), que pretende que cualquier persona que quiera dejar de fumar reciba asistencia sanitaria para hacerlo con las mejores herramientas que han demostrado efectividad científica.

La idea es que, a través de los profesionales de cualquier nivel asistencial —desde farmacias, hasta hospitales— se puedan identificar a los alrededor de seis millones de fumadores diarios que hay en España —[según la última Encuesta Europea de la Salud, de 2020](#)— y se les ofrezca ayuda. Es algo que hoy sucede de forma desestructurada, con grandes diferencias en función del lugar donde son atendidos, incluso del profesional: en un mismo centro de salud es frecuente que los haya muy formados y concienciados sobre el tabaquismo y otros que no lo están tanto.

Son, precisamente, los ambulatorios, uno de los grandes ejes de esta propuesta, que se publicará próximamente en una revista científica y que quiere combatir la principal causa de muerte prematura evitable: cada año fallecen en España 50.000 personas por culpa del tabaco, [ocho millones en todo el mundo, según la OMS](#).

Para la gran mayoría de estos fumadores debería ser suficiente con la ayuda que pueden prestar los médicos de familia. Y, solo algo menos de una quinta parte (alrededor de un millón de personas) requieren de unidades específicas de tabaquismo, según cálculos de Rábade: por tener un largo historial de recaídas, otras condiciones asociadas, un alto nivel de adicción, o no ser candidatos a los tratamientos farmacológicos, como puede ser el caso de las embarazadas.

¿Cuáles son estas herramientas? La adicción al tabaco tiene dos componentes, explica el médico de familia Jesús Méndez-Cabeza: uno puramente físico, que se combate con fármacos, y otro psicológico, para lo que es necesaria terapia cognitivo-conductual. Ambas deberían estar presentes para la gran mayoría de fumadores: cuando falta alguna, es más probable que todo el proceso fracase.

Incluso cuando se emplean todos los recursos disponibles, la tasa de éxito está solamente entre un 30% y un 50% en el primer intento, según calculan los profesionales. Pero esto sucede porque el tabaquismo no solo es una enfermedad, también es crónica. La recaída, asegura Raúl de Simón, otro de los autores del documento, es parte del proceso, “no hay que tomarla como un fracaso, ni del profesional ni del paciente”, sino simplemente como parte del camino.

Un requisito indispensable es la predisposición del enfermo. Los médicos tienen claro que si un fumador no está dispuesto a dejarlo, de nada sirve intentar iniciar un tratamiento. Los planes para dejar el tabaco

contemplan cinco fases. La primera es la de “precontemplación”, cuando todavía no se ha planteado seriamente la idea del cambio. Diversos estudios científicos mencionan un cálculo de aproximadamente un tercio de los fumadores en este estadio, lo que en España equivaldría a unos dos millones de personas sobre los que poco se puede hacer en este momento. La buena noticia es que cuatro millones serían susceptible de tratamiento.

Los primeros abordajes pueden llegar en la siguiente etapa, la contemplación, cuando hay una idea de tomar acción en los próximos meses. Le siguen la preparación, en la que se establece un plan; la acción, en la que comienza el cambio y se mantiene la nueva conducta por un tiempo; el mantenimiento, cuando se deja durante seis meses; y la recaída, que no siempre es inevitable, pero sí habitual.

El documento presentado en el congreso de Semergen, al que EL PAÍS ha acudido invitado por la organización, y que está patrocinado por Adamed —una de las farmacéuticas que comercializan tratamientos farmacológicos para dejar de fumar con subvención pública— establece un abordaje denominado de las cinco aes, al que se deberían acoger todos los profesionales sanitarios que traten pacientes que quieran dejar de fumar.

Se empieza por Averiguar, preguntar al paciente por factores y conductas de riesgo, así como sobre los aspectos que afectan al cambio de la conducta. El siguiente paso es Aconsejar de forma personalizada, para después Acordar los objetivos y métodos más apropiados en función del paciente; Ayudar con técnicas de modificación de la conducta, junto con los tratamientos farmacológicos cuando sean adecuados; para finalizar Asegurando visitas de seguimiento (en el centro o telefónicas) para apoyar y para ajustar el plan terapéutico como se necesite, incluida la derivación a unidades especializadas en caso necesario.

Para la adicción física a la nicotina hay aprobados en España cuatro tipos de tratamientos que están financiados por el Sistema Nacional de Salud. Las terapias de sustitución de nicotina (como parches o chicles, solo subvencionados en Canarias, Navarra y País Vasco); [el bupropion, un antidepresivo](#) que aumenta los niveles de dopamina, noradrenalina y serotonina, emulando la acción de la nicotina; y la [citisiniclina](#) y la [vareniclina](#), dos principios activos similares que ocupan los receptores de nicotina para que la del cigarrillo no pueda hacerlo, reduciendo el placer asociado al consumo de tabaco. Méndez-Cabeza, que ha impartido un taller en el congreso, explica que los médicos deben usar unos u otros (o dos a la vez) en función de las características de cada paciente.

Pero la adicción “más importante”, en opinión de este médico de familia, es la psicológica. “Los fumadores asocian el cigarrillo a situaciones: coge el teléfono, un cigarrillo; va en el coche y hay un atasco, un cigarrillo; un semáforo, un cigarrillo; para descansar en el trabajo, un cigarrillo; te ofrecen uno, lo coges”, enumera.

La terapia que este y otros profesionales emplean empieza tratando de que el paciente analice lo que fuma, que cada vez que enciende un pitillo piense por qué lo hace. “A lo mejor una persona que fuma dos paquetes solo siente una necesidad física real en 10”, asegura. A todos los demás hay que empezar a decir que no. Ahí es cuando está en situación de dejarlo y se puede empezar a bajar la cantidad, incluso antes de los fármacos.

Fuente: [El País, 5/10/2024](#)

[illegible]

Project Number: 2023-1-ES01-KA220-ADU-000153626

Module 3: Basic journalistic application to the analysis of an apparently informative message

Learning outcomes:

- Differentiate between the message sender and the source of information
- Identify authorized and reliable sources
- Understand the importance of verifying information
- Appreciate the value of information sources
- Recognize the relevance and appropriateness of an information source
- Detect opinion in an apparently informative message

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this educational resource is for your students to learn to differentiate between the **sender** of a message and the **source** of information (Phase 1); to understand the need to verify the information they receive (Phase 2); and to learn to assess the **relevance** and **appropriateness** of a source based on the information it provides in the message (Phase 3).

Before starting the exercise, it is worth recalling that the sender of a message and the source of information are not the same, although they may sometimes coincide. In this sense, the **sender** is the person or entity that transmits the message, while the **source** of information is the origin of the content used by that sender to craft their message. During the exercise, we will delve into some of these basic concepts—key notions to keep in mind before accepting any supposed information as true.

To achieve this, we will use the communication and journalism theories studied so far and progressively apply them to the analysis of a message circulating on a well-known social network—one of the main channels through which misinformation flows today. It is time for you to start thinking like journalists...

PHASE 1. The distinction between the sender of a message and the source of information



John Smith is an ordinary citizen with no experience or knowledge in the subject being discussed.



Mathew Anderson is a prestigious sociologist from a renowned university in your country.



The Truth is a prestigious news outlet / media organization in your country.



Ministry is the competent Ministry in your country.



Data about the senders and the message:

SENDER / WHO?	MESSAGE / WHAT?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Smith is an ordinary citizen with no experience or knowledge of the topic addressed Mathew Anderson is a renowned sociologist from a prestigious university in your country <i>The Truth</i> is a reputable journalistic outlet in your country <i>Ministry</i> is the competent ministry in your country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The social network X is used as the channel for the message It contains identical information in all four cases It is fictional information of public interest that, for the purposes of the exercise, we will consider as real It can be replaced by authentic information issued by an authorized official source from your country

QUESTION: Of the four senders, which one would you say is the source of the information?

The only correct answer is the Ministry of your respective country. This is because it is the only one of the four senders that originally has the competence and legitimacy (authority) to issue this type of information. The Ministry is, therefore, both the source of the information and the sender of the message. Meanwhile, John Smith, Mathew Anderson, and the outlet *The Truth* are senders of information whose accuracy we must question, as they do not include the legitimate and authorized source—the Ministry—in the supposed information they provide, and thus we cannot verify it directly.

Remember: The sender of the message is not the same as the source of the information.

This first phase of the exercise also allows you to reflect, together with your students, on who has the competence and legitimacy to issue information in the way it is being presented. To achieve this, it is important for students to ask themselves two key questions during the analysis of the message: **What information does it contain?** and **Who is issuing it?** As we have seen, it is the relationship between these two questions (**WHAT-WHO**) that defines the type of source we should use when reporting on a given topic (you can consult the module *Learn how to identify and check sources of information*).

Remember: Without a legitimate source in the information (as in the cases of John Smith, Mathew Anderson, and the outlet *The Truth*), the information may lack value.

PHASE 2. The importance of being able to verify the information conveyed in a message

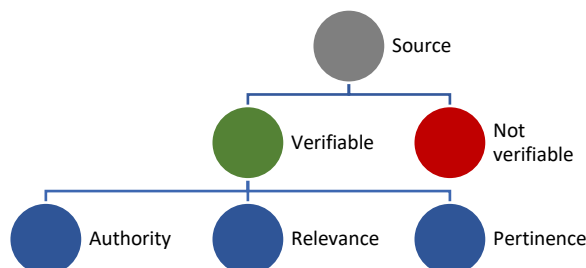


QUESTION: What makes the citizen John Smith a reliable source of information?

In this case, citizen John Smith becomes a reliable source of information because he has included the primary and authorized source (the Ministry's statement) in his message. The recipient can verify that what John Smith is communicating is true by directly (with a click) accessing the source of the information. Citizen John Smith, and of course the Ministry, are the most reliable sources here, ahead of the media outlet *The Truth* and the renowned sociologist from your university, because they still do not include the source of the information in their respective messages.

The goal in this second phase of the exercise is to delve into the concept of **verification**, the fundamental pillar upon which the credibility of any informative message is built. Verification of information is a process used in journalism—and in academia—to check the accuracy, validity, and reliability of the data and information obtained. Verifying is a key act in quality journalistic production, as it helps filter out false or misleading information and ensures the integrity of publications.

Remember: Information that cannot be verified indicates a lack of reliability and credibility.



PHASE 3. Recognize the authority, relevance, and pertinence of an information source in a message



John Smith @JohnSmith

The Government is considering lowering the voting age from 18 to 16. It is clear that the Government wants to rig the elections to stay in power.



Mathew Anderson @EconomyExpert

The Government is considering lowering the voting age from 18 to 16. The measure could strengthen the current social democratic Government.



The Truth @TheTruth

The Government is considering lowering the voting age from 18 to 16, a measure that would add 2 million new voters to the electoral roll, according to the latest data from the National Institute of Statistics.



The Truth @TheTruth

"The measure could strengthen the current social democratic Government," warns sociologist Mathew Anderson, whose University recently conducted a demographic study indicating that young voters predominantly lean toward social democratic positions.



The Truth @TheTruth

This electoral reform, which would need to be approved by Parliament, could significantly alter the political landscape in the next elections, given the considerable increase in the electorate and its predominant ideological leaning.



Ministry @MinistryofYourCountry

The Government is considering lowering the voting age from 18 to 16.



In this third phase of the exercise, we encounter elements that lead us to a different communicative scenario. The four senders—John Smith, Mathew Anderson, the outlet *The Truth*, and the Ministry of your respective country—include the source of the information (the Ministry) in their messages, and the recipient can also verify it with a simple click. However, John Smith and Mathew Anderson add new content to their respective messages, making them potential sources of information. At this point, imagine you are a journalist and try to answer the following:

QUESTION: What makes Mathew Anderson a reliable source of information for *The Truth*?

What makes Mathew Anderson a reliable source of information is his competence and legitimacy (authority) to speak on the topic at hand. He is also a relevant source because, as a renowned sociologist, he provides a contribution that aligns with the context and approach of the information, making him pertinent. (You can consult the module *Learn how to identify and check sources of information*)

QUESTION: Why shouldn't *The Truth* include John Smith as a source in its information?

The Truth should not include John Smith as a source in its information because he lacks the preparation, experience, or authority on the topic he is addressing. Citizen John Smith is offering an opinion in his message, which is, of course, very respectable, but without providing proof or evidence that the government wants to lower the voting age to "manipulate the elections" in order to "remain in power".

Remember: For an information source to be pertinent, it must be authorized, and its message must be relevant (Pertinence = Authority + Relevance).

Module 4: Learn to distinguish information from opinion

Learning outcomes:

- Distinguish between informational and opinion texts
- Identify different opinion genres
- Evaluate the informational elements of a text

INTRODUCTION

The Journalistic Genres

Journalistic genres refer to the different ways in which the same current event can be communicated. These are textual categories used in journalism to organize and classify texts according to their function: either informative or evaluative. Genres, therefore, help us structure journalistic content and determine how information is presented to the audience.

Journalistic genres are divided into **informative genres** and **opinion genres**, each with distinct formats and structures to present facts, analyze situations, or express viewpoints. This classification is based on the journalist's communicative intent, which can either be to inform or to evaluate. In this educational resource, we will delve into the distinction between information and opinion, as those who spread misinformation often disguise opinion as verified information on social media and messaging platforms, presenting something as news when it is not.

Learning to differentiate information from opinion is crucial in the fight against misinformation. It enables readers, listeners, or viewers to develop critical thinking skills and form their own judgments about events. By mastering this distinction, the audience can easily identify when they are being provided with objective information and when they are being presented with an opinion—that is, a judgment or evaluation about someone or something—through any channel, whether traditional media, social networks, messaging apps, or major digital platforms.

Informative Genres

The quintessential informative genre is the **news article**. Its goal is to convey facts and events of public interest objectively. This is the least creative and most neutral genre, as it must focus solely on providing data and quotes from other people. A news piece should always avoid adjectives unless they are attributed to sources, and it must offer concrete information to the reader, viewer, or listener.

Within informative genres, we also find the **reportage**, which interprets and explains events by providing context, background, and their possible consequences. Here, the journalist's task is not only to report the facts but also to help the audience understand them, offering context and deeper explanation without losing objectivity.

Among the informative genres is also the **interview**, which can be defined as a journalistic article based on an extensive dialogue between a journalist and the interviewee. The purpose of the interview is to obtain information, not to serve as a transmission channel for what the source (interviewee) wants to communicate. For an interview to be considered informative, its content must be verified by the journalist.

The **chronicle** is the most personal informative genre. It is very common in the journalistic cultures of Spain and Latin America but absent in the Anglo-Saxon world—especially in countries like the United Kingdom and the United States—which do not incorporate it as a journalistic genre. It is an informative narrative where the author is always a witness to the events and does not limit themselves to presenting data. While based on real and verifiable facts, the chronicle allows for the inclusion of observations, descriptions, and comments that enrich the narrative, offering the reader a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the event. Today, they often focus on current topics, giving rise, for example, to parliamentary chronicles or sports chronicles.

Opinion Genres

Opinion genres are those in which a journalist or contributor conveys value judgments, personal interpretations, or subjective perspectives on current events or relevant topics. They are characterized by offering arguments with the purpose of influencing the audience or inviting them to reflect, rather than simply presenting information objectively. Opinion genres, therefore, focus on the subjective evaluation of events, aiming to provide an interpretation or judgment about them, guiding public opinion with the goal of influencing it and sparking reflection or debate.

Among the opinion genres is the **editorial**, which is an article where the media outlet expresses its opinion on an issue of public concern, usually related to current events. The writer, always someone close to the editorial leadership, does not reflect their own thoughts but rather those of the media outlet. It is a reflection of the outlet's editorial stance, that is, its position on issues it considers important in relation to political, economic, or social organization. The main function of the editorial is to offer a clear and well-reasoned position, expressing support, criticism, or concern regarding the topic addressed, and it is common for it to also propose solutions or actions to be taken.

Another opinion genre is the **column**. Unlike the editorial, the column has a known author, which is why it must always be signed. It is an article where the opinion expressed belongs to the author, not the media outlet. The column provides a subjective and reasoned interpretation of a topic, with the aim of influencing public opinion or inviting debate. It is always published at a specific frequency: daily, weekly, or monthly. If there is no specific frequency and someone writes it on a one-time basis to give their perspective on a specific issue, it is referred to as an **opinion article**.

Structure of the Journalistic Genres

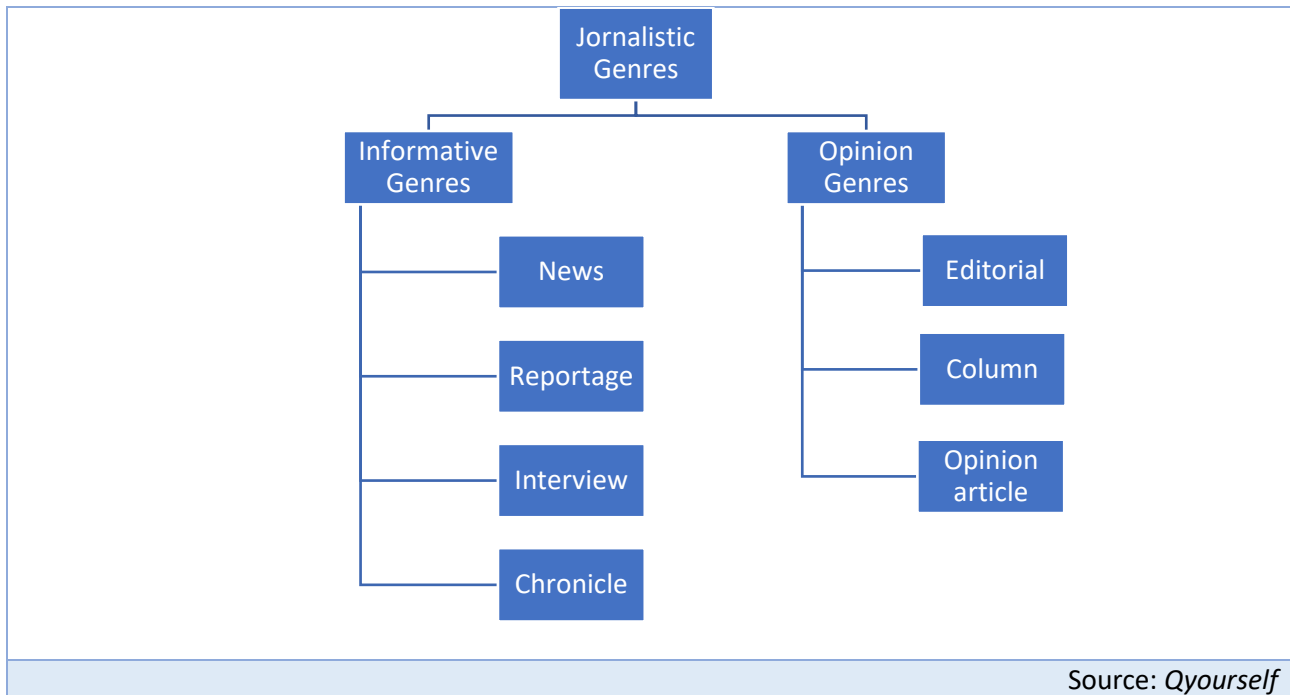


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EXERCISES

Practical exercises

Exercise 4.1

We provide you with an informative text from a high-quality Spanish journalistic outlet. You must explain why it qualifies as news (refer to informative genres: news). The only value judgment present is when the journalist describes the bill as "controversial," which is acceptable because it provides context to the information, linking this adjective to previously published details explaining the controversy.



MC

Sociedad

EDUCACIÓN · MEDIO AMBIENTE · IGUALDAD · SANIDAD · CONSUMO · LAICISMO · COMUNICACIÓN · ÚLTIMAS NOTICIAS

Germany legalizes recreational cannabis use and the possession of small amounts

Almudena de Cabo | February 23, 2024



Protesters in favor of cannabis legalization in Berlin, August 2023 | OMER MESSINGER (GETTY IMAGES)

The German Bundestag approved this Friday the controversial law project proposed by German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach to legalize cannabis use, despite strong criticism from both experts and the opposition, as well as within the coalition government of Chancellor Olaf Scholz, which consists of the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens, and the Liberals (FDP). With this measure, which is set to come into effect on April 1, the coalition government is advancing one of its main projects.

 Source: [El País, February 23, 2024](#) & author's own work

Exercise 4.2: Manipulated text (1)

The original informative text has been manipulated by including judgments or opinions against the approval of the bill (**highlighted in red**). This serves as an opportunity to explain why an ostensibly informative message that disguises opinion within it should not be trusted (remember: a news piece must be neutral, as objective as possible, and should always avoid adjectives). It is worth noting that high-quality journalistic outlets always clearly differentiate between these genres. Conversely, disinformation often circulates through different channels (mainly social networks and messaging apps), where opinion is disguised as information, hence the message has been adapted to these types of platforms.

The German Bundestag approved on Friday the controversial law project proposed by German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach to legalize cannabis consumption, despite strong criticism from experts, the opposition, and even within Chancellor Olaf Scholz's ruling coalition, comprised of the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens, and the Free Democrats (FDP). With this **regrettable** measure, set to take effect on April 1, the Government coalition advances **a dangerous project that will jeopardize the health of thousands of German citizens**.



QYourself! @QYourself!



The German Bundestag approved on Friday the controversial law project proposed by German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach to legalize cannabis consumption, despite strong criticism from experts, the opposition, and even within Chancellor Olaf Scholz's ruling coalition, of the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens, and the Free Democrats (FDP). With this regrettable measure, set to take effect on April 1, the Government coalition advances a dangerous project that will jeopardize the health of thousands of German citizens.



Source: Author's own work

Exercise 4.3. Manipulated text (2)

This time, the original informative text has been manipulated by including judgments or opinions (**highlighted in red**) in favor of adopting the measure.

The German Bundestag approved on Friday the controversial bill proposed by German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach to legalize cannabis consumption, despite strong criticism from experts, the opposition, and even within Chancellor Olaf Scholz's ruling coalition, comprised of the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens, and the Free Democrats (FDP). With this **indispensable** measure, set to take effect on April 1, the Government coalition advances a **highly beneficial project for thousands of German citizens**.



QYourse!f @QYourse!f



The German Bundestag approved on Friday the controversial bill proposed by German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach to legalize cannabis consumption, despite strong criticism from experts, the opposition, and even within Chancellor Olaf Scholz's ruling coalition, comprised of the Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens, and the Free Democrats (FDP). With this indispensable measure, set to take effect on April 1, the Government coalition advances a highly beneficial project for thousands of German citizens.



Source: Author's own work

Exercise 4.4

Reflect on how opinion disguised as information biases the news and steers us toward a particular viewpoint: against cannabis legalization (manipulated text A) or in favor of it (manipulated text B). Remember that distinguishing information from opinion is crucial, as those who spread misinformation often mask opinions as verified information, presenting something as news when it is not. Also, keep in mind that misinformation is not a phenomenon found in high-quality journalistic outlets but rather on social networks and in messages distributed via messaging apps.

Exercise 4.5

We provide you with two opinion articles published in Spain by journalistic outlets. In the first, the author opposes cannabis legalization. In the second, the author supports legalization. The goal is to explain that opinion itself is not negative but must be clearly identified as such so the audience can easily recognize it. Remember that high-quality journalistic outlets always label opinions as such, ensuring readers, listeners, or viewers understand that these are opinions and not information.

Opinion text against the legalization of Marijuana

ES NOTICIA		Israel		Audiencias ayer		El Hormiguero		Guerra Rusia Ucrania		Ayuso		Peter Lim		Madeleine McCann		Huracán Milton		Puigdemont		Incendio Guilleña		AEMET Madrid		Santoral
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Marijuana: The Most Dangerous of Drugs



Isabel Díaz Ayuso | May 18, 2024

Why is marijuana or cannabis the worst drug of all? Mercedes Rodríguez, director of Proyecto Hombre in Madrid, has clear reasons: its use begins at very early ages, often before 15; it triggers mental illnesses, particularly psychotic episodes; and it affects all aspects of young people's lives, jeopardizing their future.

Moreover, current cultivation techniques make cannabis today four times more potent than it was two decades ago each joint is equivalent to four. Cannabis is falsely labeled as a "soft drug," a term used to whitewash its image decades ago, now reinforced by derivatives like CBD. While there are drugs that directly cause more deaths, like fentanyl, cannabis destroys more lives, especially among young people, as all users of harder drugs started with marijuana. We should heed the voices of those who know this fight best: the "mothers of drugs," Proyecto Hombre, Narcotics Anonymous, teachers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and desperate families.

They all warn us of the dangerous narrative linking cannabis to "health" and the "therapeutic." This misleads young people into associating cannabis with something "natural" and "good," to the point where they believe cigarettes are worse.

CHILD RISK

CBD is becoming a gateway to marijuana. Children and young people are defenseless against CBD campaigns, backed by powerful interests, with these products even finding their way into pharmacies and stores near schools. The Madrid regional government is preparing legislation to protect minors, within the limits of its powers, from cannabis-derived products.

This trend is expanding alongside massive legalization campaigns in countries we once admired, like the United States and Canada, whose cities are now filled with "zombies" and the smell of marijuana—the scent of decay. Some argue for "freedom" to justify drug use, but they forget that a society full of addicts becomes unlivable. Drugs dismantle entire societies, pose public health and safety issues, and lead to marginalization, loneliness, school failure, abuse, unemployment, and ruin. Drugs are the primary cause of poverty worldwide.



Cannabis Plants Seized by Police in a Madrid Raid

Moreover, we are being made to forget that drug trafficking is the most powerful criminal network in history. The worst dictatorships in the world have connections to drug trafficking, just like all terrorist groups across the globe.

Addictions, unfortunately, are the most egalitarian issues; they affect all social levels and environments. Every family shattered by drugs recognizes its own tragedy. David Bowie once said in an interview many years ago that he quit drugs because they made him a worse person. When he was using, he didn't care about anyone, and no one mattered to him.

For young people, the consequences of marijuana use include schizophrenia, self-harm, psychosis, anxiety, depression, and even suicide. We must also consider the link between drugs and crimes such as murder, rape, gang involvement, and theft. That's why those who work with children and youth understand that cannabis legalization is a complete folly. Legalization leads to greater availability and increased consumption.

The existence of a black market would not be resolved by legalization because it would have to be global, or we would become an island drowning in drugs. There would still be a cheaper and unregulated black market (as is currently the case with benzodiazepines in Spain). Moreover, we forget that drugs and addiction are never satisfied; they aim to take over the addict's life, starting with preventing them from living, destroying their surroundings, and ultimately killing them.

CONTROL LAWS IN MADRID

At a certain point, an addict becomes a sick person who needs help. However, what must be avoided is the first step; prevention must be emphasized, especially among young people. Family, friends, and schools are the key areas for prevention.

Marijuana addiction, cannabis use, is already a national and global emergency. This fight is the firm commitment of the Government of the Community of Madrid. We have been the first to raise the alarm, to take action, and we will engage in a political, informational, and cultural battle against this scourge of our time.

Source: [El Mundo, May 18, 2024](#) & author's own work

Opinion text in favor of the legalization of Marijuana

Seleccione: **ESPAÑA**

SUSCRÍBETE INICIAR SESIÓN


EL PAÍS

Opinión

EDITORIALES · TRIBUNAS · COLUMNAS · EL DEBATE · CARTAS A LA DIRECTORA · DEFENSORA DEL LECTOR · LAS FIRMAS DE EL PAÍS

Freedom for Drugs

The PP (People's Party) and PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) are seriously mistaken in blocking the debate on cannabis; drug trafficking will continue to win this war and provoke violence. The only solution is legalization, with judicial oversight and market regulations.



Mario Vargas Llosa | November 7, 2021

The Socialist Party, in power, and the Popular Party, in opposition, have forged a temporary alliance in the Spanish Parliament to put an end to cannabis, which seemed destined to be tolerated in Spain. They are gravely mistaken. This prohibition will only serve to strengthen the drug trafficking mafias that already operate in Spain, albeit less than in Mexico and other Latin American countries, and will increase their criminal activities as well as drug consumption in the country.

When I was a candidate in the 1980s, I lived in a movement that was fueled by the passion of the program. We believed it would play a crucial role in the election, and we were completely wrong: it had no impact, and most voters didn't even read it. But for me, it was stimulating; according to the program, all Peruvian problems had solutions. Except for drugs, which escaped the control of the country because they were an international issue.

In what we Peruvians call the “mountain eyebrow,” between the Andes and the Amazon, the territory of coca, the source of cocaine, produces up to three harvests a year; despite the fact that farmers do not consume drugs, they only grow and sell them. They chew coca, meaning they masticate it, and the juice they extract protects them from the cold, hunger, and fatigue. Colombian planes arrive in the lonely areas of that mountain range, and their pilots pay in dollars for the cargo they take away. Who would convince the farmers that they should replace their coca crops with alternative products, which they would sell through terrible roads that take many days to reach the Agrobanco in the cities, which pays them in soles and, moreover, late, poorly, and never? No one, of course. And that's why coca production is becoming more extensive every day in Peru and Latin America, and the cocaine trade, which often comes to us imported from abroad, is intensifying.

The only solution to this problem is the brave approach taken by Uruguay: to liberalize the drug trade, although I don't understand why only a state-owned company exercises that right; the law should be free, and private entrepreneurs should also enjoy that trade (needless to say, under strict state supervision). This was the solution proposed many years ago by liberal economist Milton Friedman, who also added that if the fight against drugs continued to grow, those who relied on that work would become the worst enemies of its liberation. Exactly this has happened.

Those who fight against drugs today are many thousands of people and institutions around the world, starting with the United States, where DEA officials are now vigorous opponents of its legal redemption. We are accustomed to being informed, based on statistics and surveys, that the fight against drugs is achieving many successes, that its circulation is decreasing, and similar claims. But the truth is that drugs are sold everywhere—the drug dealers give them away at the doors of schools so that young people, and even children, become early users—and the corruption and violence unleashed by powerful cartels knows no limits. Hundreds of women, their preferred victims, and many others are undermining the states, at ministerial levels and sometimes even involving the presidents themselves, as has been the sad case in Peru.

The problem is even deeper. Government systems and authorities are corrupted or will be by the torrents of money that drugs produce, to the extent that, in certain places, which will continue to expand, everything

depends on them and the officials involved in their circulation. States cannot compete with those who spend and squander delirious sums to ensure control over certain cities or regions, which are practically left in the hands of drug traffickers, where they gradually replace state authorities.

Faced with this drama, there is no choice but legalization. It is logical to start with lesser drugs, as some advanced countries have already done, to measure the consequences and then, with a medical prescription, move to harder drugs that are truly remedies for schizophrenia and other diseases. By the way, at least in Peru, there is an old controversy—made up of heated discussions, articles, and books—between doctors who see the legalization of cocaine as a serious danger to the health of users (they are a minority) and those who, on the contrary, believe that addiction to it would not be worse than that caused by cigarettes and alcohol. But what is of immediate interest is to put an end to that unexpected counter-power that, in many places, has already replaced the state and is the one that dictates the law.

I am not exaggerating at all. In cities where drug use was secret and unconfessable, nowadays it is little less than public, accessible to everyone, and has become an exhibition of modernity, youth, and progress.

In any case, the worst solution is to aggravate penalties and increase law enforcement against drug trafficking. It is clear—and the case of Mexico is not the only one—that as persecution increases, drug traffickers, who have all the money in the world, arm themselves with machine guns and more sophisticated rifles bought in the United States, and multiply demonstrations of strength, leaving a trail of dead in the towns and cities they control. That path, of hecatombs and massacres, is not realistic.

Of course, freedom for drugs has its risks, and the state must confront them, in this case, with greater judicial and police control over those who would be harmed by that law. Likewise, it is imperative that health systems provide detoxification and treatment services to those willing to free themselves from that burden, which could also pose a serious danger to health. All of this is reasonable and fruitful. However, it is not reasonable to act as if, in reality, we are defeating drug traffickers. That is not the case. They are the ones winning the war. We must take off the blinders and acknowledge it. And they will continue to win as long as states try to destroy them. They are the ones destroying us.

The worst part is the violence associated with this situation in which major traffickers are objects of cult—the most frivolous magazines and programs report on them, as their popularity is great—and the persecutions and wars they wage among themselves are already part of everyday reality, as if the consequences of all this were not the tortured and dead multiplying everywhere. The solution to the problem is not only in the legalization of drugs, of course. But, in the immediate sense, it is the only way to put an end to the illegality surrounding this issue, in which dozens or hundreds of innocents perish every day, and in horrific conditions. Legalization will put an end to this excessive violence that paralyzes progress and keeps many countries in underdevelopment.

Source: [El País, November 7, 2024](#) & author's own work

Module 5: Transferring and applying previous learning outcomes in a new learning situation

What is a learning situation?

A *learning situation* or *learning scenario* is a situation we create in a competence-based educational context to promote meaningful learning. The aim is to create a real and complex situation that poses a challenge to the learners and gives sense and an aim to the whole learning process.

The main characteristics of a learning situation are:

- It is a real and complex situation usually connected to the experiences of learners (personal, social, academic or work experiences).
- It should pose a certain level of difficulty, a challenge, that needs to be solved and motivates the learner.
- It must be meaningful to the learners (connected to their interests, adapted to their level of knowledge, useful...).
- It should give them the opportunity to apply their knowledge to a context: students should be able to integrate and mobilise their knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to solve a real problem.
- It requires reflection on what they know, what they need to know.
- It requires planning and freedom to choose the solution.

The example presented here aims at putting students in the shoes of a journalist in order to work on the competences of journalism and learn to transfer and apply those competences in any other situation they may encounter in the future. The point of departure is a challenge we pose to our learners; this should motivate them to find a solution, applying what they have learnt about the work of a journalist.

The challenge

The first thing you need to do is to think of a situation that can imply a CHALLENGE as close to reality as possible to your learners, so that the activities they have to carry out result meaningful and learners see the use that it may have in their everyday lives. This challenge will vary depending on

learners' interests, needs or age. In this example, designed for *secondary school*, we suggest to present learners with the following situation:

- There are comments in the classroom about a social media message containing a hoax that has gone viral among *youth*. Some believe it, others don't, but they are all worried about the consequences and want to know how to deal with disinformation.

You can choose the **hoax** that you consider most appropriate for your learners. Like in the situation above, ask them to bring a recent viral hoax they have identified, so that the activities you will work on are more meaningful to them; or suggest one yourself so that you can connect it to the contents you intend to teach.

Previous knowledge and planning

Together with your learners, you decide to organize a **CLASSROOM DEBATE** about disinformation (if possible, let learners ask their own questions):

- what is the problem?
- what are the consequences?
- why is it important to face this problem?

It is important to have this debate because this is the moment when learners start to think how to face the challenge and define the steps they need to follow for that.

One of the main questions in the end should be: **"what can we do about it?"**. And here, if none of the students has come up with it already, the teacher could lead them to think about the professionals that deal with information: journalists.

- What if we try to learn from them?
- How do journalists think when they check their sources and write their articles?

By the end of the debate students will probably have an idea about what they know and what they don't know, as well as what they need to learn. They can start **PLANNING**. You can use the following template for this:

PLANNING TEMPLATE

What do we know about this problem?		
What do we still need to know/learn about this problem so that we can solve it?		
Things we need to do (WHAT)	WHO will do them	WHEN

Transferring and applying what we have learnt: thinking like a journalist and becoming a gatekeeper

This is where the materials developed by the journalism team should be introduced. We have 4 modules that will guide us through the work and competences of journalists so that students are able to face the challenge posed in the beginning.

According to the time available and the characteristics of the students, in this 5th module the teacher can choose the ACTIVITIES to work on each of the 4 modules. Ideally, and to promote their protagonism in their own learning process, students should also be able to decide on their own what activities would be more useful for them; but in most cases it will probably be the teacher who decides.

The 4 modules and their learning outcomes are presented in the table below, so that you can decide what is more appropriate. The materials have been designed to advance progressively, so it is advisable to follow the order of the modules.

Modules 1, 2, 3 and 4 and their respective learning outcomes	
Identify and check sources of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associates topics with documentary sources • Rigorously evaluates the reliability and quality of sources • Searches for, selects, and retrieves sources • Seeks alternative sources
Distinguish and understand the elements of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies theoretical knowledge to concrete cases • Assesses the informational elements of a text • Learns about the strengths and weaknesses of news products in W

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchises and prioritises web information • Consumes texts critically
Analyze an apparently informative message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiates between the message sender and the source of information • Identifies authorized and reliable sources • Understands the importance of verifying information • Appreciates the value of information sources • Recognizes the relevance and appropriateness of an information source • Detects opinion in an apparently informative message
Distinguish information from opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish between informational and opinion texts • Identify different opinion genres • Evaluate the informational elements of a text
Source: Qyourself	

As a teacher, you can use the theoretical explanations about the previous modules in this manual as teaching guide and adapt the contents to the age and characteristics of learners.

In the example we present here, considering the characteristics of our learners and the time available, we have decided to do the following activities suggested in the previous modules:

IDENTIFYING THE ELEMENTARY Qs

Activity 1: Search for elementary Q's

Read carefully the text/message you have chosen and identify the elementary Qs in it.

What:	
Who:	
Whom:	
When:	
Where:	
How much/many:	

Once you have identified the elementary Qs, answer the following questions:

- Ask yourself about the absence of elementary Qs: should they be present or not?
- Question the relevance and accuracy of the elementary Qs.
- Mark the sources in the elementary Qs and pay special attention to their relevance.

Source: Qyourself

ANALYZING AN APPARENTLY INFORMATIVE MESSAGE

The objective of this educational resource is for your students **to learn to differentiate between the sender of a message and the source of information** (Phase 1); to understand the need to **verify the information they receive** (Phase 2); and to learn to **assess the relevance and appropriateness of a source** based on the information it provides in the message (Phase 3).

Activity 2: Distinguishing between sender and source (phase 1)

Before starting the exercise, it is worth recalling that the sender of a message and the source of information are not the same, although they may sometimes coincide. In this sense, the sender is the person or entity that transmits the message, while the source of information is the origin of the content used by that sender to craft their message. During the exercise, we will delve into some of these basic concepts—key notions to keep in mind before accepting any supposed information as true.

To achieve this, we will use the communication and journalism theories studied so far and progressively apply them to the analysis of a message circulating on a well-known social network—one of the main channels through which misinformation flows today. It is time for you to start thinking like journalists...

It is important for students to ask themselves two key questions during the analysis of the message:

What information does it contain?

Who is issuing it?

Remember: *The sender of the message is not the same as the source of the information.*

We can trust the senders of information who have the competence and legitimacy (authority) to issue this type of information. In those cases they are both the source of the information and the sender of the message.

HOWEVER: There may be several senders of information, but not all of them include the legitimate and authorized source in the supposed information they provide, and thus we cannot verify it directly. In those cases we should question the accuracy of the information.

Remember: *Without a LEGITIMATE source in the information, the information may lack value.*

Source: Yourself

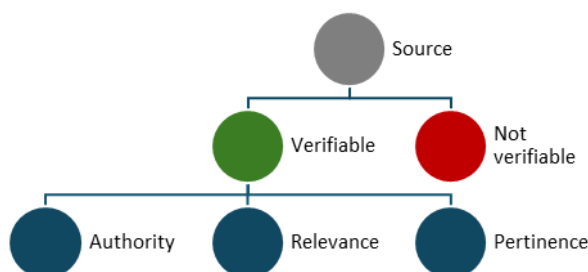
Activity 3: Verifying the information conveyed in a message (phase 2)

What makes a person or organisation a reliable source of information?

A RELIABLE source of information is one that includes the primary and authorized source in a message. The recipient can verify that what is being communicated is true by directly (with a click) accessing the source of the information.

The goal in this second phase of the exercise is to delve into the concept of VERIFICATION, the fundamental pillar upon which the credibility of any informative message is built. Verification of information is a process used in journalism—and in academia—to check the accuracy, validity, and reliability of the data and information obtained. Verifying is a key act in quality journalistic production, as it helps filter out false or misleading information and ensures the integrity of publications.

Remember: Information that cannot be verified indicates a lack of reliability and credibility.



Source: Qyourself

Activity 4: Recognizing the authority, relevance, and pertinence of an information source in a message (phase 3)

What makes a source of information PERTINENT?

Remember: For an information source to be pertinent, it must be authorized, and its message must be relevant (*Pertinence = Authority + Relevance*).

What makes a person or organisation a reliable source of information is their competence and LEGITIMACY (AUTHORITY) to speak on the topic at hand. (You can consult the module *Learn how to identify and check sources of information*)

Source: Qyourself

Activity 5: Distinguishing information from opinion

Explain whether this message qualifies as news (justify your answer).

REMEMBER:

- Opinion disguised as information biases the news and steers us toward a particular viewpoint. Distinguishing information from opinion is crucial, as those who spread misinformation often mask opinions as verified information, presenting something as news when it is not.
- A news piece must be neutral, as objective as possible, and should always avoid adjectives. An ostensibly informative message that disguises opinion within it should not be trusted. It is worth noting that high-quality journalistic outlets always clearly differentiate between these genres. Conversely, disinformation often circulates through different channels (mainly social networks and messaging apps), where opinion is disguised as information.
- Opinion itself is not negative but must be clearly identified as such so the audience can easily recognize it. High-quality journalistic outlets always label opinions as such, ensuring readers, listeners, or viewers understand that these are opinions and not information.

Source: Qyourself

Responding to the challenge and making informed decisions

Once students have completed all the planned activities, students **should be able TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS** about the disinformation they receive. In the case of the students of the example, what is the answer they will give to the hoax that had become viral? How are they going to interact with this message?

It could be a good idea to have a **FINAL WHOLE CLASSROOM DEBATE** before they take the decision. This decision can be collective or individual, but the debate is a good opportunity to reflect on what they have learnt, do a recap and summarise the arguments of their peers based on the journalists' strategies they have just learnt.

Besides, while they carry out all those activities students must have an aim that guides their learning progress and leads them to create a **FINAL PRODUCT**. In this case, this final product can be the decision they take about the viral hoax, or the creation of a decalogue or infographic to raise awareness about the risks of disinformation and how to deal with it.

You as a teacher can suggest what should be the final product, or students can decide by themselves, but it should be an answer to the initial challenge (an informed decision about how to interact with hoaxes, how to develop a critical attitude towards information, how to detect and counter misinformation...).

In the case of the learners from our example, we would ask them to decide what to do with the hoax that prompted the learning situation, and to create an **INFOGRAPHIC** that raises awareness about the risks of misinformation and offers tips to counter it. Below there are some links they can use to help them create the infographic:

- <https://www.canva.com/learn/how-to-make-an-infographic/>
- <https://www.canva.com/learn/create-infographics/>
- <https://venngage.com/blog/how-to-make-an-infographic-in-5-steps/>

Some tips for classroom dynamics and assessment

Teamwork:

We suggest that this work is carried out in small groups of 4-5 people and that you use cooperative structures and strategies to promote communication, the exchange of ideas and opinions, and positive interdependence among group members. The “think-pair-share” strategy works well when students need to reflect on their own and then share their ideas with a bigger group. In the case of longer projects, you can use the “jigsaw” strategy to promote positive interdependence among group members. You can find more cooperative strategies in the following link: <https://www.teacheracademy.eu/blog/cooperative-learning-strategies/>

Source: *Qyourself*

Debate:

We have suggested two debates in this example, one in the beginning and one in the end. It is up to the teachers and students to decide whether they want to have one debate, two, or none. It will depend on the time available, and the aims set for the strategy. For the debates, in case your students are not familiar with debate strategies, we suggest you start by having students sitting in small groups of 4-5 around a table with a big piece of paper where you have written the main question to be discussed in the centre. Then ask students to discuss in small groups and add new questions, ideas or contributions they want to make. Once they have finished, each group can summarise the main contributions of their discussion and a representative of each group can explain them to the rest of the classroom. This can be a way to prepare a whole class discussion where the teacher will collect and summarise the most important points identified. This can be a good method both for the definition of the problem and planning in the beginning of the learning situation, and for the final debate before students make their own informed decisions.

Source: *Qyourself*

Assessment:



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You may not need to assess the work of your students, but in case you need to assess their work, we suggest you create a rubric with the assessment criteria you consider most relevant (degree of accomplishment of the activities proposed in the 5 modules and their learning outcomes, quality of the product, quality of teamwork, participation in debate activities). Make sure you show this rubric to your students before they start working, so that they know how they will be assessed and what is expected from them. Another suggestion is that you ask your students to draw a fishbone diagram summarising the decision-making process they followed, so that they become aware of the different steps of the 5 modules and their relevance (see example in image below). Besides, it is always a good idea to have a brief self-assessment or reflection activity (the final debate can serve this purpose, but you can also use a self-assessment form).

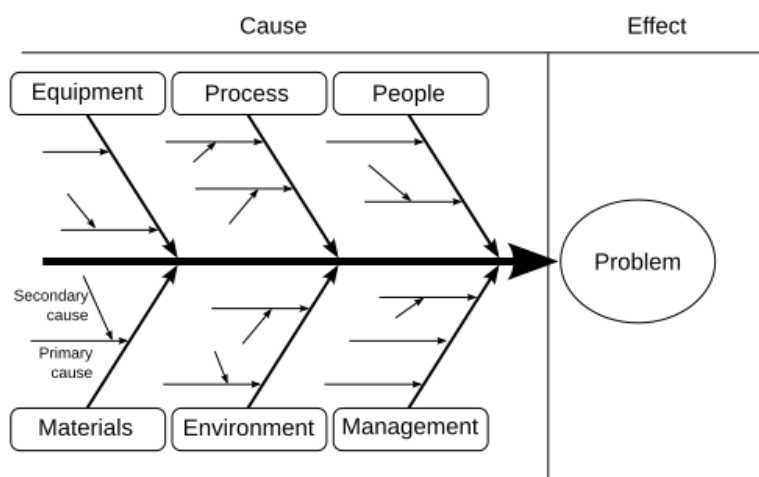


Image: Ishikawa fishbone-type cause-and-effect diagram, CC BY-SA 3.0

Source: *Qyourself*





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