How to avoid false information about COVID-19

AgeAction

Getting Started KIT

DCU | Institute for Future Media & Journalism

MEDIA LITERACY IRELAND

Irish Printing Federation

NALA
National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

About Getting Started

The Age Action Getting Started Keep In Touch (KIT) is a national learning initiative to help older people to improve their digital literacy skills so that they are connected, informed and supported.

The Getting Started KIT is made up of How To guides and a video tutorial, presented by Mary Kennedy, in order to support older people to learn, use, and be confident using smartphones and applications.

You can find all the How To Guides and the video on www.ageaction.ie

About this guide

Using your phone, tablet or computer is great for keeping in contact with family and friends and finding interesting things to watch and read.

However, you might come across some information that looks real but is false or inaccurate. A lot of false information has been created about COVID-19.

That is why it is important that you identify reliable sources of information and be cautious about any other information you see, read or hear. This leaflet tells you about reliable sources of information, steps you can take to check information, and how you can recognise the main types of false information.

Reliable sources of information

Reliable information comes from official sources or experts have checked it.

Reliable information about COVID-19 is provided by the following organisations and updates are available from their websites:

- Health Service Executive (HSE)   www.hse.ie

- Government of Ireland   www.gov.ie

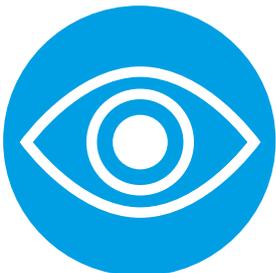- World Health Organisation (WHO)   www.who.int

- Age Action   www.ageaction.ie

You can hear or read updates from these reliable sources reported on national and local media: Irish television, radio, newspapers, and on the online versions of newspapers. For example, you can find RTÉ News at this link: rte.ie/news/

How to check if information is reliable

When you come across a new piece of information, check if it is reliable by following these steps:

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Identify the source	Check reliable sources	Ask someone you trust
Look for the named source of information: do you recognise it as a reliable source?	Compare reliable sources: are they reporting the same information?	If you are still unsure: can you ask someone you trust to investigate it?

You can get more advice about how to check online information on the Be Media Smart website: www.bemediasmart.ie

False or inaccurate information

People create false information for many reasons: to create confusion, to make money, to support a cause or for a joke.

Anyone can be tricked by false information. Most people who share false information do not intend to cause harm. They think they are helping others by sharing the latest update.

But false information is harmful because it creates unnecessary fear. If you are unsure about a piece of information, do not share it until you know it is reliable.

How you can recognise different kinds of false information

There are many kinds of false information and they may seem convincing and look real. On the following pages, we look at four kinds of false information:

1. rumours,

2. hoaxes,

3. scams, and

4. conspiracy theories.

Remember to ask yourself the following questions about each type of information:

- Is it from a reliable source?

- Are other reliable sources reporting the same information?

1. Rumours
Common rumours about COVID-19 include false claims about household cures, new government measures and unreported cases. Rumours are often attributed to "a friend who works in a hospital" or "doctors in China". These are not reliable information sources. **?** **Ask yourself:** Is the information based on official facts or hearsay?

2. Hoaxes
Hoaxes might seem believable because they use the logos and language of official organisations. Hoaxes often look like breaking news or updates from the government, HSE or WHO (World Health Organisation). You can get real updates on official websites and from national and local news media. **?** **Ask yourself:** Are other reliable sources reporting the same information?

3. Scams

COVID-19 scams often look real because they use the logos and language of official organisations like the HSE or your bank. Some scams ask for personal information like bank details and passwords. Others ask you download or open harmful links. If in doubt, ignore the message and ask for help from someone you trust.

? **Ask yourself:** Am I being asked for personal details or offered a link to something?

4. Conspiracy theories

There are many conspiracy theories about COVID-19. These theories claim to know who 'created' the virus or the 'hidden purpose' behind it. These theories are not true. The virus was not created by anyone and there is no hidden purpose.

? **Ask yourself:** Does someone claim to know who 'created' the virus or why?

You can find out more about false COVID-19 information on the website of the World Health Organisation (WHO): https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters

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