

Building a Media and Social Media Literacy Lesson Sequence

Giving students the keys to a critical, responsible use of digital media

Upper primary to high school

Two 55-minute sessions

Teachers · Student welfare staff · Librarians

This resource helps teaching teams design, step by step, a media and information literacy sequence focused on social media: mapping students' actual habits, building critical thinking about images and information, and preventing harmful behaviour (rumours, harassment, exposure of private life).

1. Learning objectives

Skills targeted

Building critical thinking about information and images; understanding how social media works and its economic drivers; recognising risks (rumours, harassment, privacy breaches) and where to find help.

Frameworks referenced

National digital skills framework, citizenship curriculum, media and information literacy standards.

2. Before the session: setting the stage

- Find out which platforms the class actually uses (an anonymous survey beforehand, or via student welfare staff).
- Pick two or three concrete, anonymised examples (neutralised screenshots, fictional cases) rather than pointing to a situation experienced by a student in the room.
- Inform student welfare staff if the topic touches on a sensitive situation currently unfolding in the school.
- Prepare ground rules for discussion (the right not to answer, confidentiality).

3. Running the sequence

1 Warm-up & gathering first impressions — 10 min

Icebreaker: “Which platform could you not do without? Why?” Collect, without judgement, the uses, benefits and worries students raise.

2 Short input — 15 min

A brief explanation of how social platforms capture attention (algorithms, likes, notifications), the difference between private and public online, and the idea of a lasting digital footprint.

3 Small-group workshop — 20 min

Study two or three anonymised cases (a spreading rumour, a photo shared without consent, a group chat that turns sour). Each group identifies the risks, the people involved, and proposes a responsible response.

4 Debrief & standpoint debate — 15 min

One spokesperson per group reports back in one minute. A standpoint debate on a simple statement (e.g. “What is posted privately can stay private”) to surface the range of views.

5 Wrap-up & written takeaway — 10 min

Together, build five or six “responsible social media use” reflexes to keep in a notebook or display in class.

4. Adapting by age group

Age group	Main focus	Activity format
Upper primary (ages 9–11)	Digital footprint, privacy, first platforms (online games, family messaging apps)	Character-based stories, role play
Middle school (ages 11–15)	How platforms work, rumours, cyberbullying, sextortion	Case studies, standpoint debate, quiz
High school	Attention economy, personal data, misinformation, digital identity and future plans	Group project (podcast, poster, class charter)

5. Further resources

- **National media literacy bodies** — media and information literacy teaching packs.
- **Safer-internet organisations** — videos and thematic packs for primary and middle school.
- **Data protection authorities** — personal data resources for young people.
- **The netethic “I am a witness” and “I am a victim” sheets** as a follow-up if the session brings up a bullying situation.

6. Facilitator tips

Stance — Stay neutral and non-judgemental: the goal is to get students thinking, not to make them feel guilty about their habits. Always start from anonymised examples, never from a situation involving an identifiable student in the room. If a student discloses a personal situation during the session, refer them afterwards to student welfare staff or the school nurse rather than addressing it in front of the class.

7. Possible follow-ups

- Produce a class social media charter, displayed all year.
- Take part in a national anti-bullying awareness campaign or competition.
- Train student digital ambassadors to act as peer contacts for other classes.