



Every day, we are bombarded with information from media: from traditional sources such as television, radio and newspapers, to newer sources such as online videos and social media. With so much information coming from so many sources, it can be difficult to know what is true, and it can be all-too-easy to believe or even spread false information.

The assets within this toolkit are designed to help to **improve media literacy** and to **build citizen resilience to false information**.

WITHIN THIS TOOLKIT, YOU WILL FIND:

- ◆ The definition of media literacy, and why it is important.
- ◆ Introduction to *Harmony Square*, an online game designed to build resilience to false information, and how it works.
- ◆ Lesson plan and poster

This toolkit and the accompanying assets are also available in Russian and Ukrainian

What is

media literacy?

&

Why

is it

important?

Media literacy is the ability to understand and filter information from different sources and viewpoints. Those who are media literate are able to:

- ◆ Understand the difference between fact and opinion.
- ◆ Understand that authors, creators and commentators may be biased, and may be presenting information in a way that advances their own particular agenda.
- ◆ Recognise at least some of the manipulation techniques that are used to influence readers, listeners and viewers.

Those who are not media literate are more vulnerable to **misinformation** (the unwitting spreading of false information, without the intention to mislead) and **disinformation** (the deliberate spread of information that is known to be false).

Research has shown that media literacy is correlated with higher levels of satisfaction with democracy. Those who are media literate are better able to spot mis- and disinformation in relation to democracy and liberal values.

Improving media literacy can therefore **help to stem the flow of mis- and disinformation**, and increase **support for democracy and liberal values**.

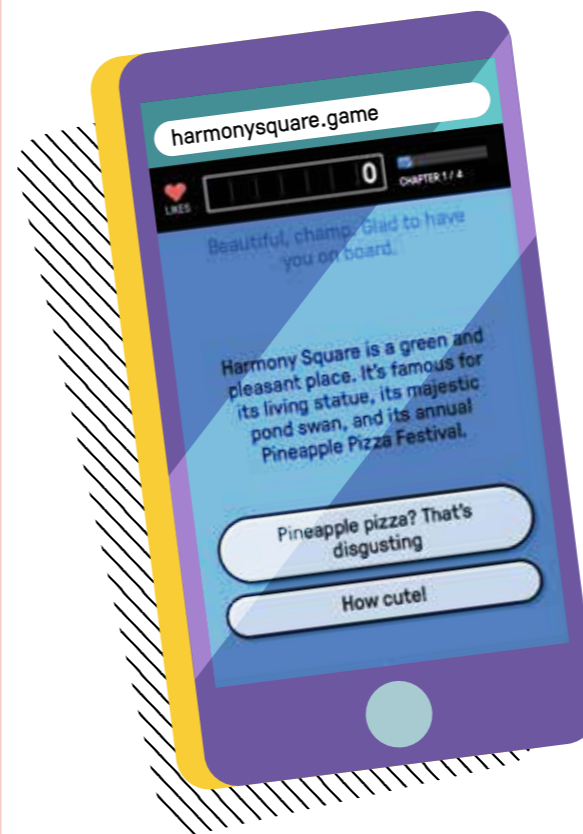
Introducing

BREAKING

HARMONY SQUARE

Harmony Square is a short, free-to-play online game that is designed to help players become more resilient to mis- and disinformation.

The game is based on **inoculation theory** – the idea that **we can become more resilient to mis- and disinformation if we are exposed to it in small doses**. If we practice the sorts of manipulative techniques that are used to propagate false information within the controlled environment of the game, we are more likely to recognize and be resistant to those techniques in our daily lives.



Research has shown that the game does have the desired effect – those who play it are less likely to believe false information, more confident in their ability to judge whether or not information is false, and less likely to spread false information.

[harmonysquare.game](https://www.harmonysquare.game)

Roozenbeek, J., & van der Linden, S. (2020). Breaking Harmony Square: A game that “inoculates” against political misinformation. Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review.

How

does

BREAKING HARMONY SQUARE

work?

In the game, players are hired as the **Chief Disinformation Officer** of a fictional, peaceful place called Harmony Square. Their job is to break that peace by provoking social tensions and creating division around a seemingly innocuous topic.

Through the game's 4 levels, players learn 5 different manipulative techniques:

- 1 **TROLLING:** Deliberately provoking heightened emotions
- 2 **USING EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE:** trying to make people fearful or angry
- 3 **ARTIFICIALLY BOOSTING CERTAIN MESSAGES:** faking Likes and shares or buying followers
- 4 **SPREADING CONSPIRACY THEORIES:** blaming a powerful, secret group for otherwise unconnected events
- 5 **CREATING DIVISION:** emphasizing differences within and between groups of people

Despite the serious intent behind the game, the game itself is designed to be light-hearted and engaging, with colourful visuals and plenty of humour.



LESSON PLAN

HARMONY SQUARE

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Understand the dangers around mis- and disinformation
- 2 How to identify mis- and disinformation techniques and prevent the spread of false information
- 3 Understand the importance of media literacy

60 MINS

WHAT IS MEDIA LITERACY?

10 MINS

The ability to understand and filter information from different sources and viewpoints. Those who are media literate are able to:

- 1 Understand the difference between fact and opinion.
- 2 Understand that authors, creators and commentators may be biased, and may be presenting information in a way that advances their own particular agenda.
- 3 Recognise at least some of the manipulation techniques that are used to influence readers, listeners & viewers.

WHAT IS MIS AND DIS INFORMATION

10 MINS

Misinformation

Misinformation is misleading, inaccurate or completely false information that is communicated without the explicit intent to deceive

Disinformation

Disinformation is false information that is shared with the intention of misleading people

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW TO IDENTIFY MIS AND DIS INFORMATION?

10 MINS

Today we are exposed to so much information from a variety of sources: from traditional sources such as television, radio and newspapers, to newer sources such as social media (Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook).

With so much information from so many sources, it can be difficult to know what is true, and how easily you can spread false information.

QUESTIONS

- Do you think you have ever been exposed to false information? Where?
- Can you identify it? How?
- Do you ever think it has an agenda beyond what it is saying?

PLAY THE GAME

15 MINS

The idea of the game is that we can become more resilient to mis- and disinformation if we are exposed to it in small doses.

If we practise the sorts of manipulative techniques that are used to spread false information within the controlled environment of the game, we are more likely to recognise and be resistant to those techniques in our daily lives.

harmonysquare.game



DISCUSSION ABOUT THE GAME WITH THE PUPILS

15 MINS

- What did you think about the game?
- What did you learn or spot?
- What resonated the most about the characters?
- What tactics did they use?
- Have you seen examples of this in real life?

How

to

use

BREAKING

**HARMONY
SQUARE**

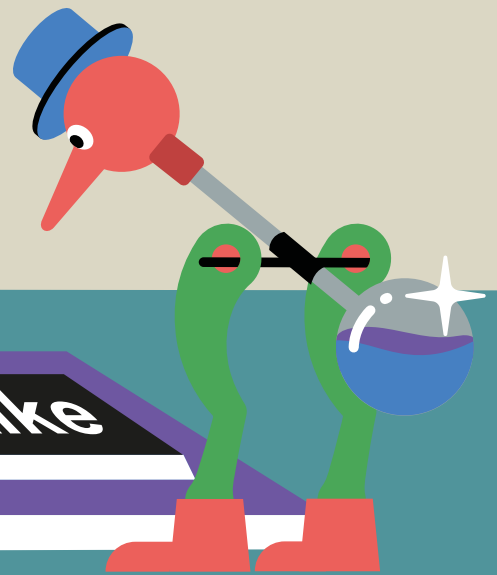
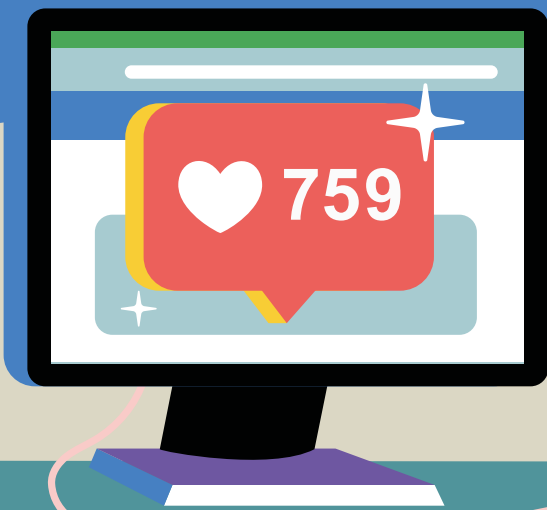
TIMING

The game is always live and can be played at any time. However, there may be moments in which the game could be more relevant. Are there any events within their community that might mean that they are seeing more mis- and disinformation than usual?

Are

'likes'

always real?



PLAY HARMONY SQUARE

a free online game, to learn how to resist disinformation

harmonysquare.game