

We no longer debate facts, says Harry

[theday.co.uk/we-no-longer-debate-facts-says-harry-4](https://www.thedailybeast.com/we-no-longer-debate-facts-says-harry-4) 19 August 2024



Spot the truth: The prince said a lot of people were "scared and uncertain" about the possible impact of AI and that "education and awareness" would be key to tackling disinformation.

Is he right? The prince is in South America to discuss the growing problem of "alternative facts". But experts are still deeply divided over the solution to online false information intended to mislead.

What's happening?

"What happens online within a matter of minutes transfers to the streets. People are acting on information that isn't true". That is how Prince Harry summarised the problem of disinformation last week.

Harry has more reason than most to fear the spread of disinformation and the **misinformation** it too often leads to. Last year he sued the publisher of the *Daily Mirror*, alleging that the paper and other news outlets had used **illicit** phone-hacking to gather information on him and then publish it alongside speculation and falsehoods.

Find out more

How can we fix this problem? Harry suggests the answer is education. People should be taught how to tell the difference between truth and falsehood.

In Finland, students are taught how fake troll accounts operate, and also learn how to spot them. The result is that Finns now have the highest rate of media literacy in Europe.

But others are not so sure that education alone is enough. They say it can be tricky to teach people to be able to distinguish "good" facts from "bad" information.

The most basic way of understanding "truth" is to define it as "what corresponds to the facts". This is known as the "correspondence theory". But reality can be interpreted in different ways, making it hard to agree on what is "true".

Another approach is "coherence theory", which states that things are true if they add up to a **coherent** whole. Truth is not a question of relating to reality, but relating to other facts, like assuming a puzzle piece belongs if it looks like it completes a picture.

Is he right?

Some say

Yes! The only way to stand up to disinformation is to build media literacy. We can only do this through education.

Others think

No! Disinformation does not make people violent. We cannot deal with online lies without tackling our deep social problems.

FOR YOUR SUMMER READING CHALLENGE CLUE GO TO STEP SIX IN THE SIX STEPS TO DISCOVERY BELOW.

Six steps to discovery

Some people say

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Do you ever find yourself falling for online disinformation?

"Truth, like gold, is to be obtained not by its growth, but by washing away from it all that is not gold."

Leo Tolstoy (1828 – 1910), Russian writer

What do you think?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Do the disadvantages of social media outweigh the advantages?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Go back through the article above and pick out one thing we know for sure (a fact) and one opinion.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are put in charge of stopping disinformation in your country. What is the first thing you do?

5. Express

What do others believe? - Get in a small group. Each of you should come up with one definition of "truth". Discuss your answers and agree among you whose definition is strongest and why.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Summer Reading Challenge Day 22 clue: What "B" is the name of the capital of Colombia? Download your challenge entry form [here](#) and fill in the answers to the clues.

Glossary

Misinformation - Incorrect or misleading information unintentionally presented as fact. It can be contrasted with disinformation or deliberate lies.

Illicit - Not legally permitted or authorised.

Coherent - Logical and well-organised.