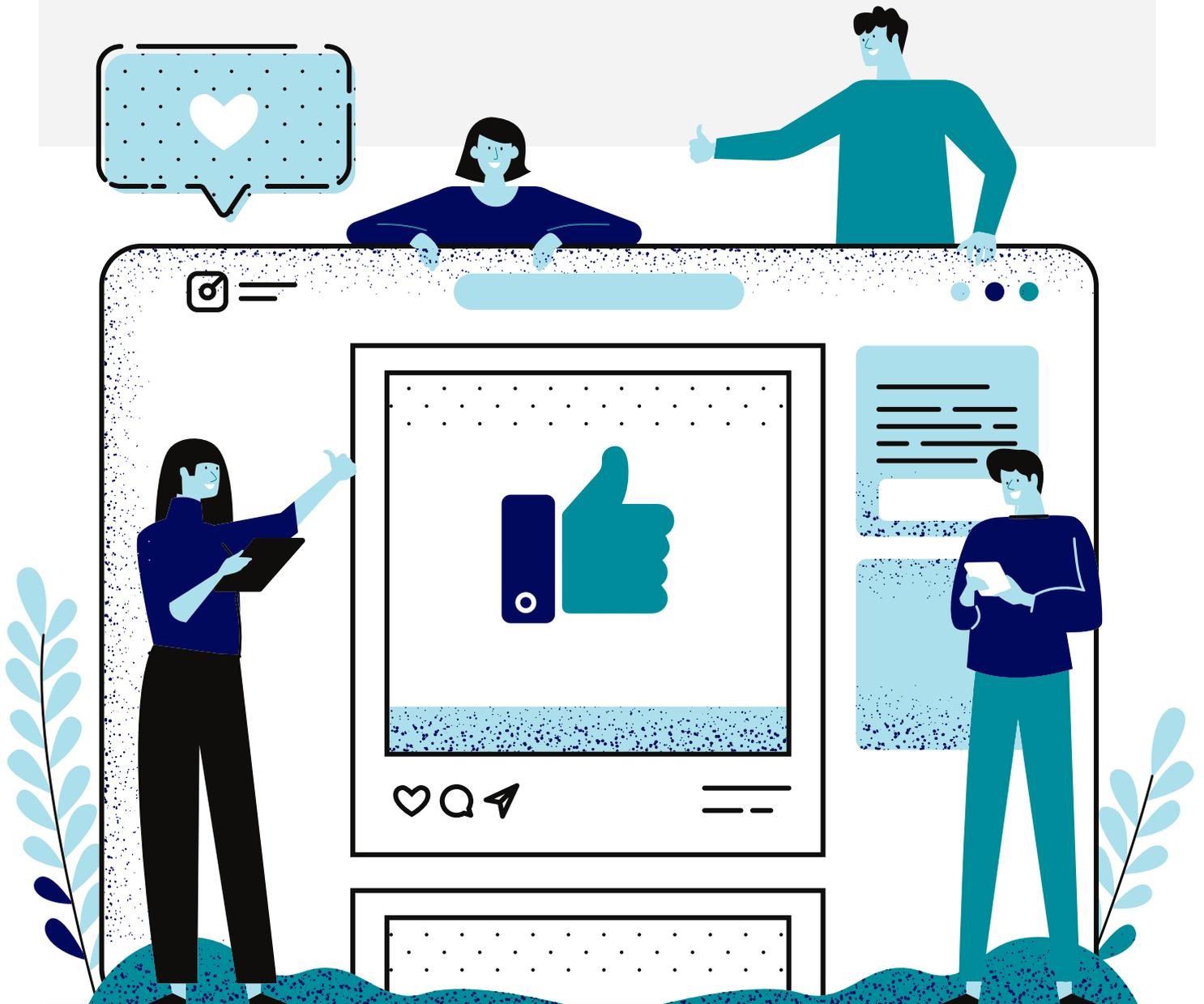


# DIGITALISATION: A FRIEND OR AN ENEMY OF THE MODERN AGE?



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# DIGITALISATION

## About the Brochure



**"The Digital Revolution is far more significant than the invention of writing or even of printing."**



- Douglas Engelbart, inventor of computer mouse

Digitalisation is a complex, ever-evolving process and it is often difficult to decide whether it is something good that needs to be developed further, or whether it is a threat to the way we functioned so far?

The goal of this guide is to inspire you to think about different ways digitalisation is changing the lives of you and those around you - your students. The brochure covers the topics of digitalisation & digital natives and asks different relevant questions: who are digital natives, what is the role of entertainment in social media consumption, what are the rules of digital communication and how to form relationships in the digital age. Every topic has belonging questions and topics for discussion, and is created for independent use. We hope it will teach you something new and motivate you and your students to tackle all the layers of this complex topic.

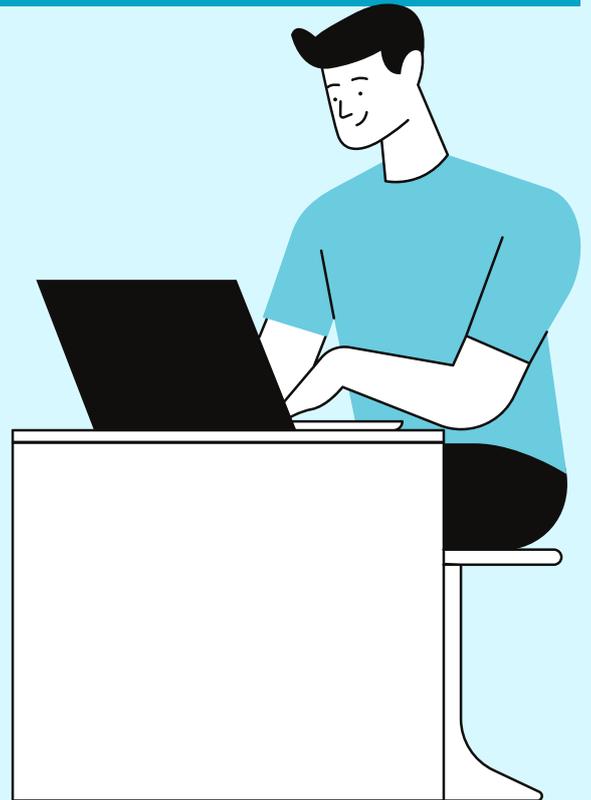
# DIGITALISATION

## The Endless Impact?

Digitalisation, the process of incorporating digital technologies into social and business procedures with the goal of improving them, has been spreading through our world exponentially throughout the last decades. The digital world has grown and had an effect on every aspect of our lives: our education, jobs, social circles, relationship, business - even the way we dress or have fun.

### **Digitalisation is transformative.**

And when the COVID-19 pandemic happened, with billions of people going online to work, study, or just to stay in touch, people and organisations were forced to immediately learn and apply new digital knowledges and practices.



## **DISCUSSION TOPIC 01: THE ENDLESS IMPACT OF DIGITALISATION**

Sometimes, it seems that digitalisation has changed almost every part of our lives, no matter where we are or what we do. Some of these things it has changed for the better (e.g. it makes things convenient) or for the worse (e.g. digital products can be addictive).

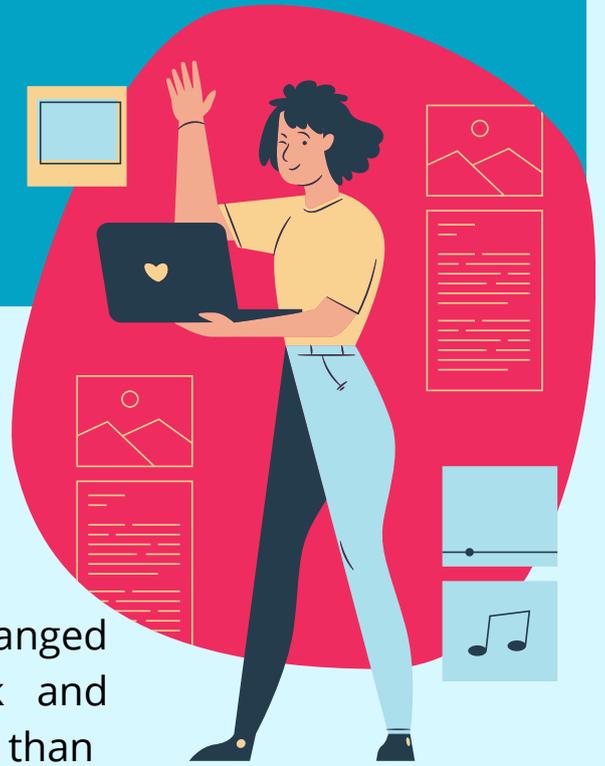
**Divide the class in two groups, one advocates for and the other against digitalisation. Try to give as many straightforward arguments about the benefits and disadvantages of digitalisation on society until one group runs out of them.**



# DIGITAL NATIVES

Who are they and why does it matter?

Digital Natives are the people who have grown up and experienced life under the influence of the internet and other digital technologies. New digital tools have fundamentally changed young people, causing them to think and process information significantly different than their predecessors.<sup>1</sup> In other words - **people who have been exposed to modern technology think, learn, and understand the world differently than those who have not.**



## DISCUSSION TOPIC 02: MOVING TO THE DIGITAL WORLD

Digital Natives have grown up surrounded by and using cell phones, computers, video games, and all the other modern technological toys and tools - they know and understand them. Digital Natives are both creators and products of the new digital culture.

**But what about people who didn't grow up in that world?**

Digital Immigrants are people who were born before digital became mainstream. When it comes to using technology, they have just "moved" into that world. They are still figuring it all out, like in the process of learning a new language.



**Did students notice differences in their use of the new digital tools between themselves and, for example, their parents? Describe these differences. Why do they think the differences exist?**



<sup>1</sup> "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," Marc Prensky, *On the Horizon*.

## DIGITAL NATIVES - WHAT ARE THEY LIKE?<sup>2</sup>



### **They have a broader view of who they are**

This generation sees themselves in a complex, holistic and nuanced way. They incorporate their interests and passions, including online interests, into their identity.

They are fun, active, creative and motivated, and they want other people to see that.

### **Independent, active, informed**

Digital natives actively seek out new information and expand their knowledge - because everything they might want to know is in the palms of their hands. They are bold, outspoken, young rebels who are more inclined than previous generations to form their own opinions and rethink previous conventions.



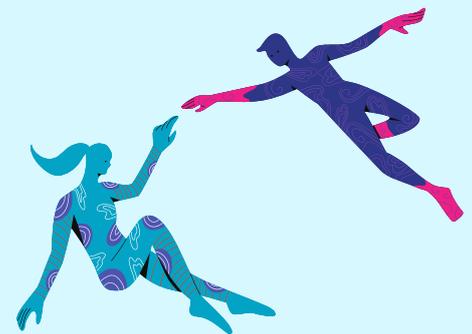
### **Ready to change the world**

Digital media and all the benefits of the online world are a powerful tool for starting change - and digital natives know it. They have a global perspective and define their community by shared interests and worldviews rather than geography.



### **Connected**

The number one thing this generation can't go a day without is checking social media, communication, and/or camera apps. This ranks higher than talking with parents, talking with friends, watching videos and reading the news.

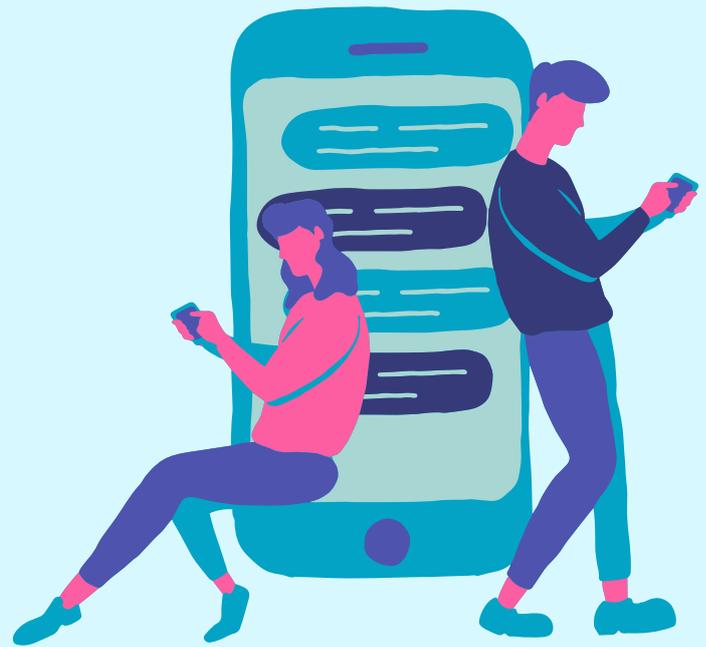


### **They want to be entertained**

As a result of the pressure to excel and change the world, this generation also has a strong desire to bring joy back into their lives. This need for laughter, fun and silliness became a tool to keep them recharged & energized.



This is the generation that can and has begun to compare itself with more people than ever before. At the same time, they were taught the value of hard work and the importance of drive and determination. This weight of passion and expectations, combined with all the current problems of the world they grew up in, has led to this generation being more stressed than previous generations.



**They respond by having a strong desire to bring joy & fun back into their daily lives.**

### DISCUSSION TOPIC 03: DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT

To recharge, Digital Natives seek out moments of levity, joy, silliness, and just plain fun. This includes the entertainment they consume, the digital media on which they rely, and the hobbies pursue as they spend more time at home than ever before. They channel their energy into creativity and connection, developing skills and confidence that will serve them well in the future.

**Now that we know that "wasting time on social media" actually has multiple purposes for Digital Natives generations, let us explore this topic in more detail. Discuss:**

-  **How do students typically spend their time on social media?**
-  **What kind of content do they consume and why?**
-  **How do they recharge offline?**

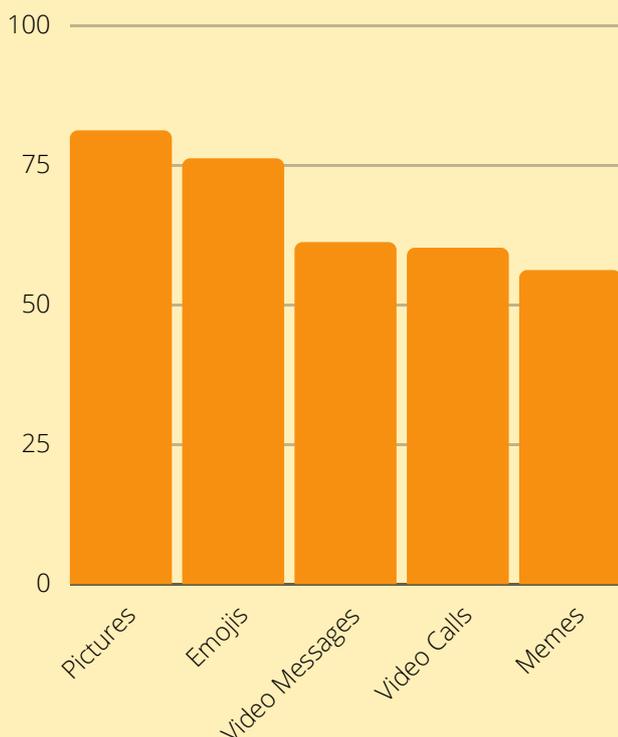
**“Our generation forms a bridge between previous and future generations in a new era of technological progress and global change.”<sup>2</sup>**

- Annik, 22, Netherlands

## DIGITAL NATIVES AND COMMUNICATION

With new technologies, communication changed significantly. It became faster - instantaneous - and stripped of all unnecessary linguistic burdens. Language has changed, memes and emojis were created, and new generations use a language that evolves so quickly that sometimes even they don't understand everything.

**Today, the top 5 items used in digital communications are<sup>2</sup>:**



### DISCUSSION TOPIC 04: DIGITAL, LANGUAGE & SOCIAL SKILLS

In a world where 80% of digital communication includes some form of media and as it is increasingly difficult to write a formal e-mail, it is important to ask some questions:

? **What does constant digital interaction do for students' communication skills? Has it changed their ability to respond in face-to-face situations?**

? **How has online communication changed students' speech, vocabulary, and grammar? Give examples. Can this new language of digital natives be taught? Why/why not?**



Imagine this. Two people enter the same room, each from a different entrance. They look each other in the eyes, neither of them changes their facial expression, then they look the other way, find their respective parties, join them, and start talking. They never even look in the other person's direction.

**Were these two people talking? No.**

**But were they communicating? Yes.**

Two people in the same room have to communicate. **It is simply not possible not to.** We use our nonverbal signals to send subtle messages, which help us navigate the social jungle better. In the above-mentioned example, the two people don't know each other, and they are sending a message "We don't know each other and we don't want to meet". For example, if they look into each other's eyes and frown, we could imagine that the message is "I know exactly who you are and I don't like you". In short - **communication is unavoidable and instant**, whenever someone interacts with us.

### **But what if the digital world allows us to be in constant interaction with everyone?**

### **What are the rules of modern communication?**

#### **DISCUSSION TOPIC 05: THE RULEBOOK OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION**

Explore the differences between the way students communicate online and in-person: how often they talk, about what, with whom and in what way.

After that, try to come up with at least 5 universal rules for online communication, and name 5 things that are generally considered rude in the digital world - **thus creating a first Digital Communication Bonton.**



Today, we live in a technological universe in which we are always communicating. And yet, it seems that we have sacrificed conversation for the sake of simply having a connection. The conversation itself is essential in our lives: to our **relationships, creativity, work, and our ability to exchange ideas and offer support.** Meaningful conversations in our families, classrooms, and workplaces help us develop empathy, intellectual skills, and knowledge about ourselves.

**"We are so oriented toward our devices, especially young people, that it is becoming increasingly difficult to want to engage - even when we're literally in the same room."<sup>3</sup>**

- Tricia Jones, Klein College of Media and Communication

## FORMING RELATIONSHIPS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Sherry Turkle, the professor of social psychology at MIT, argues that this new experience of being together in person, as well as being elsewhere because of devices that make us accessible anytime, anywhere, undermines our ability to have meaningful conversations.

**Experiments show that you can decrease the quality of a conversation and the degree of connection its participants feel toward each other by something as simple as placing a silent phone on the table between them.<sup>4</sup>**

Luckily - that can be changed: research shows that children's empathy markers rise again after five days at camp without a phone.



<sup>3</sup> <https://news.temple.edu/news/2020-09-16/coronavirus-pandemic-has-made-communication-more-important-ever>

<sup>4</sup> <https://news.mit.edu/2015/3-questions-sherry-turkle-reclaiming-conversation-1117>

At the same time, we can't deny many practical benefits of online communication and forming relationships in a digital way. They offer<sup>5 6</sup> :

- **real-time, instant connection with people all over the world**
- **a new way to meet people who are similar to us**
- **platforms to deepen existing relationships**
- **a safe space for identity experimentation and discovery**
- **increased opportunity for self-disclosure**
- **perceived social support**

Because interpersonal relationships are among the strongest predictors of well-being, some researchers argue that online communication serves primarily to strengthen existing relationships while avoiding feelings of loneliness. However, there's no denying that it also offers unique ways of safe communication and that it is possible to have meaningful conversations and form deep connections using digital tools.



### **DISCUSSION TOPIC 06: DIGITAL VS. IN-PERSON CONVERSATION - WHICH IS BETTER FOR FORMING RELATIONSHIPS THAT LAST?**

Are digital devices the tools that allow us to meet new people who are like us, and form friendships and connexions that we could not otherwise form? Or are they attention thieves, constantly buzzing and ruining the focus and quality of conversation in face-to-face social situations?

The answer is probably not one or the other - different people and different situations need different forms of connection. **Think of all the benefits and recognise problematic aspects of each kind of communication. How can students get the most out of them?**

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740914000693>

<sup>6</sup> <https://partner.sciencenorway.no/forskningno-norway-partner/how-does-social-media-affect-your-well-being/1454613>

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE DIGITAL WORLD



Healthy relationships have always relied on accessibility, responsiveness, emotional engagement and - effective communication. During the mandatory lockdown, many people unexpectedly started studying and working from home with little to no face-to-face interaction, except with people they live with.



Even when people had experienced in-person communication, they had to wear masks and keep their distance, which makes the communication more difficult, artificial, even awkward.



The pandemic has made the whole world stop interacting with people the way we used to, and forced us to spend more time on online communication platforms such as Zoom or Skype. **This type of communication brings special challenges, such as not being exposed to nonverbal cues that generate emphatic responses, which makes it harder for people to understand and emotionally connect with family, friends or partners.<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.temple.edu/news/2020-09-16/coronavirus-pandemic-has-made-communication-more-important-ever>

**At the same time, online options showed us the way to still connect to people even when we can't see them in person, or to finally talk to the ones we lost touch with.**

Online birthday celebrations, game nights, one-on-one coffee dates, or even just sharing pictures with important people in their lives, allowed everyone to deepen the relationships they were building, even during the stressful times of the pandemic times.

**In conclusion - the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we talk to the people we love and to the people we study or work with.<sup>3</sup> Have digital tools and modern options made communication more available and convenient, or more difficult and confusing?**



## **DISCUSSION TOPIC 07: THE EFFECT OF PANDEMIC ON DIGITAL NATIVES' RELATIONSHIPS**

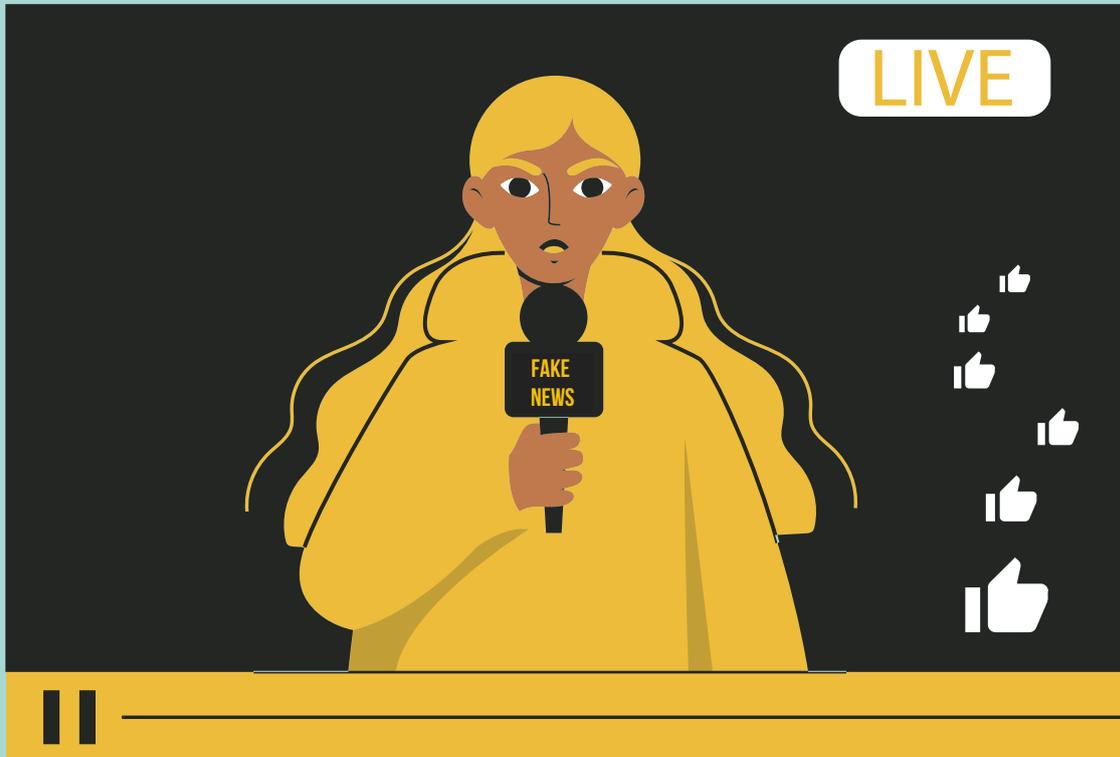
Start a conversation on connecting during the pandemic. Inspire students to **share their experiences** and to:

 **discuss pros and cons of online communication**

 **think of different consequences online communication may have on relationships during or after the pandemic**

 **brainstorm fun ways to spend quality online time together**

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND INFODEMIC



COVID-19 pandemic is the first pandemic in history where technology and social media are being used. While health authorities had tried to use them to keep people safe, informed, and productive, the overall state of uncertainty, fear, as well as short-lasting data, caused an overabundance of information, not all of which were reliable or correct. This is how **infodemic** has happened.

**The term "infodemic" is a combination of the terms "information" and "epidemic," and it refers to an abundance of both true and false information that makes it difficult for people to access legitimate sources and obtain valid guidance when it is most needed for decision-making.<sup>8</sup>**

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.who.int/news/item/23-09-2020-managing-the-covid-19-infodemic-promoting-healthy-behaviours-and-mitigating-the-harm-from-misinformation-and-disinformation>

An infodemic also involves an increase in the volume of information on a specific topic, which can grow exponentially in a very short period of time. In this situation, **scientific and technical evidence is mixed with speculations, manipulated data, fake expertise, misleading information, and false and skewed news, making it difficult for the recipient to process and judge it all.**<sup>9</sup>

**Misinformation and disinformation can be harmful to people's physical and mental health, increase stigma and jeopardize valuable health gains** - so a very common mental health tip was to get away from social media and 24/7 news channels.



**Infodemic also leads to poor compliance to public health measures, reducing their effectiveness and damaging countries' ability to stop the pandemic. In short, infodemic costs lives.**<sup>10</sup>

## DISCUSSION TOPIC 08: STOPPING INFODEMIC

Infodemic is a modern threat: today it is mainly connected to the topic of COVID-19, but there is no doubt that the spread of misinformation via social media will continue in the future.

**What can we do to stop this? How can we be sure that the information we have is correct? Is there any way **to** recognise reliable from untrustworthy sources?**



<sup>9</sup> <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/54452>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab_1)

## CRITICAL THINKING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

**Critical thinking means evaluating ideas, observations or experiences, exploring the evidence and carefully considering whether something makes sense, whether these discoveries can be applied in a specific context and finally, if so, how useful or effective this would be.<sup>11</sup>**



**"Good critical thinking includes recognising good arguments even when we disagree with them, and poor arguments even when these support our own point of view."**

- Stella Cottrell, Critical Thinking Skills

To get the most out of digital technologies, children and teenagers must develop critical thinking skills. **Teaching them to ask questions and to be skeptical will assist them in navigating a lot of information available online.** They will be able to comprehend the meaning of the messages they receive by asking questions. They will be able to spot fake stories, judge whether the information they are reading is accurate or not, whether the sources are trustworthy, and whether there is bias.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.criticalthinking.org/>

## DISCUSSION TOPIC 09: HOW TO PROPERLY ANALYSE A PIECE OF ONLINE INFORMATION?

Critical thinking consists of four important parts:

1. Analysing and evaluating information and arguments
2. Recognising patterns and connections
3. Identifying and building meaningful conclusions
4. Applying these conclusions to a real-world context

In order to evaluate information in a detailed, objective, and structured way, it is important to first ask a lot of questions. **For this discussion, choose a recent important topic from the media and encourage your students to ask (and find answers to) these questions:**

**How reliable is the source for this information? How can I tell it is reliable?**

**Are there fallacies in the logic?**

**Who benefits from telling this story?**

**What is the evidence supporting this claim?**



**Is there anything important missing?**

**Who is saying this?**

**Does the writer show sensitivity to the alternate point of view?**

**When was this information last updated?**

**Is there, and what is, the other side of this issue?**

# Digitalisation: a friend or an enemy of the modern age?

*Digital brochure created by the Utopia 500 team. 2021.*

