

Listening skills practice: How false information spreads – exercises

Listen to the radio interview about how false information spreads and do the exercises to practise and improve your listening skills.

Preparation

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition and write a–j next to the numbers 1–10.

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|----------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1..... ^g | inaccuracies | a. to prove that something is true |
| 2..... ⁱ | to vaccinate | b. to write or say the words of a writer, book, etc. |
| 3..... ^b | to cite | c. an African mammal with a long nose that eats ants |
| 4..... ^j | measles | d. a plan to trick or deceive someone |
| 5..... ^c | an aardvark | e. to intentionally damage property belonging to others |
| 6..... ^d | a hoax | f. to change something so that it doesn't work as intended |
| 7..... ^e | to vandalise | g. statements that are not correct |
| 8..... ^a | to verify | h. not based on facts or proof |
| 9..... ^f | to tamper with something | i. to give a person an injection to prevent them getting a disease |
| 10..... ^h | unfounded | j. an infectious disease which covers the body in small red spots |

1. Check your understanding: multiple choice

Circle the best answer to these questions.

- Which statement about circular reporting is true?
 - It is the spread of true information.
 - It is when false information is validated by one other source only.
 - It only occurs with information on Wikipedia.
 - It may involve several publications.
- Which statement is true about journalists?
 - They are not permitted to copy information from Wikipedia.
 - They refuse to copy information from Wikipedia.
 - As soon as they include information in an article, they verify the information.
 - Many journalists may publish inaccuracies in several articles.
- Which statement is correct?
 - Another name for a coati is a Brazilian aardvark.
 - The American student changed the information on Wikipedia to what he believed to be the truth.
 - Many people believed that a Brazilian aardvark was the same as a coati.
 - When writers wrote about the Brazilian aardvark they knew it was a joke.

4. Which statement is true about Wikipedia?
 - a. Some people add false content to a Wikipedia entry intentionally.
 - b. Updating information on Wikipedia is against the law.
 - c. There is hardly any true information on Wikipedia.
 - d. Many true facts on Wikipedia initially appear as false information.
5. What is true about childhood vaccines and autism?
 - a. There is a clear connection between childhood vaccines and autism.
 - b. Circular reporting incited many parents not to vaccinate their children.
 - c. The claims that they were connected first appeared on Wikipedia.
 - d. The media proved early on that the claims about vaccines and autism were false.
6. Which statement is correct?
 - a. Generally speaking, it's easy to identify false information.
 - b. If the original source is Wikipedia or the media, the information is almost always false.
 - c. Reflecting critically on what we read is something most people often do.
 - d. Lack of time to think and investigate can cause us to believe things that aren't true.

2. Check your understanding: gap fill

Complete the expressions from the audio with a phrase from the box.

take things at face value	by any means	spread like wildfire	In a nutshell
thought nothing more of it	in no way		

1. In a nutshell (using as few words as possible), it's the confirmation of false information.
2. ... and in no way (not at all) is obvious as being false.
3. ... then he forgot about it and thought nothing more of it (spent no time thinking about it).
4. That's not to say that all information on Wikipedia is false by any means (not at all).
5. ... unsupported claims were picked up by the media and spread like wildfire (became known by lots of people very quickly).
6. We often take things at face value (accept things as they appear, rather than thinking carefully about them).

Discussion

Do you use Wikipedia? What's your opinion of it?

Have you ever believed information and later discovered it was false? What happened?