

Mediawise Teacher's Guide

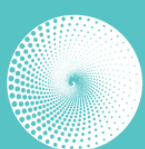
Best Practices for Teaching Media Literacy

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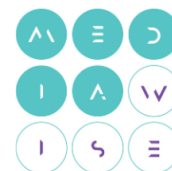


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Foreword. Are you already teaching media literacy?

The Mediawise Teacher model is built on the belief that people who, from an early age, develop the ability to ask questions, justify their choices and decisions, show empathy, and seek reliable information are better equipped to contribute to a more participatory and civically engaged society. At the same time, they develop a deeper understanding of their relationship with both traditional and digital media, strengthening their autonomy as media users and citizens. We want young people to critically examine and reflect on their online experiences from multiple perspectives, including an awareness of digital rights and responsibilities, civic participation, and the development of their own tastes, beliefs, and preferences.

From our perspective, media literacy is about developing, practising, and strengthening competencies that are neither confined to a single school subject nor limited to a single field of study. By their very nature, these competencies are transdisciplinary. *Language and Communication* subjects help students learn to express and justify opinions, use source texts to support arguments, and critically analyse multimodal texts. *Social Sciences* foster democratic citizenship, active and responsible participation in community life, and competencies such as observation, dialogue, awareness of personal and group identity, respect for diversity, and critical reflection on oneself and on social events. *Mathematics* and the *Natural Sciences* develop students' ability to interpret and use data about the objective world, helping them recognise errors in the information they frequently encounter online. They also strengthen logical and analytical thinking and, together with technology education, equip students to solve problems and participate actively and responsibly in digital content creation. *The Arts* cultivate students' ability to interpret, create, and critically analyse visual and multimedia content.

In short, you have most likely already incorporated elements of media literacy into your teaching, even if you have not explicitly used media topics, media products, or digital technologies in your lessons. This is why the Mediawise Teacher professional development programme in media and digital literacy is designed for teachers of all subjects. We strongly believe that teachers can enrich their classroom practice by integrating competencies and content related to media and digital literacy. You can be one of them.

With this guide, we aim to provide additional methodological support to complement your training in the Mediawise Teacher programme. To develop it, we identified the questions and challenges teachers most frequently encounter when introducing media literacy activities in the classroom. Drawing on feedback from Mediawise teachers-collected through surveys conducted throughout the programme, as well as through face-to-face and online mentoring sessions-and on the expertise and research of the Mediawise Society trainers, we have compiled a set of practical strategies and good practices to support and encourage your work in teaching media literacy.

For additional teaching resources to support your journey, visit www.mediawise.ro and explore the [Digitaliada Platform](#), where you will find teaching materials created by Mediawise teachers and opportunities to join our community. You can discover and share classroom activities through the Mediawise Teacher community.

1. What does it mean to be ready to teach media literacy

In short, it depends on who your learners are and how you define “ready.” There is an important distinction between being a media literacy trainer and being a teacher who integrates media literacy into the classroom. In the first case, advanced knowledge of media and cultural studies, extensive practical experience, and the qualifications required to deliver professional training for adults are important.

The second role is the one most likely to describe you-as a reader of this guide and, probably, a participant in the Mediawise Teacher programme. The professional development offered through the programme builds on the pedagogical and subject-specific expertise you already have. If you have completed our training programme (or another media literacy training course) and benefited from mentoring by the Mediawise trainers, you already have the foundation you need to teach media literacy. It is no different from the many other competencies teachers develop through continuing professional development and later apply in their own classrooms.

Many factors can hold us back when we want to try something new or pursue a goal: feeling that we are not good enough, imposter syndrome, limited institutional support, lack of time among existing responsibilities, or the perception that the effort required outweighs the potential impact. The reality is that teachers can never be completely certain of the impact they will have. Learning is influenced by far too many factors for that.

This guide offers practical suggestions for evaluating your classroom activities so that you can assess and reinforce students’ learning while helping them become more motivated and curious.

From both personal experience and the experience of teachers who have successfully integrated media literacy into their own subjects, I believe there are three key ingredients that determine whether-and to what extent-you will do the same: courage, curiosity, and motivation.



COURAGE



CURIOSITY



MOTIVATION

Teaching media literacy requires the courage to explore new approaches and occasionally step outside your comfort zone. The effort pays off when students are engaged by new perspectives and contemporary issues that connect directly with their own media culture. The time invested at the beginning-learning, researching, and preparing activities-will bring long-term benefits. As your confidence grows, preparation

becomes easier, and you will naturally identify more opportunities to incorporate media literacy into your lessons.

Curiosity will keep you engaged with the field, helping you discover new case studies, resources, and classroom activities that you will want to explore with your students.



Perhaps the first step is to ask yourself why you want to teach media literacy. What motivates you? Is it external factors, such as institutional expectations or improving your relationship with your students? Or does media literacy align with your own values and aspirations as an educator? The [Set Your Motivation](#) self-assessment developed by the Media Education Lab is a useful tool for reflecting on the reasons that inspire you to teach media literacy.

2. Navigating artificial intelligence: Ethical use by teachers and students

Perhaps the greatest challenge teachers face today is the rapidly growing use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) by students to complete learning tasks. There are valid reasons to question its use, as AI systems can reinforce stereotypes, spread misinformation, and encourage standardised ways of thinking and working (ApTI, 2025). At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that this technology is already widespread and easily accessible. Rather than avoiding it altogether, we need to learn how to use it ethically-for the benefit of both teachers and students.

The key question is how. What principles and boundaries should guide the responsible use of AI tools in education? While we do not claim to have all the answers, this section aims to help you navigate this challenge with greater confidence and clarity.

What can you do with AI in the classroom?

The first step is to become familiar with the key concepts and experiment with different AI tools to understand how they work and how they might support teaching and learning. It is useful to consult an up-to-date glossary of AI terminology, such as this one, which defines generative AI as “a technology that creates text, video, images, or code based on input data and the patterns it identifies within that data” (Khan, 2025).

Although ChatGPT is perhaps the best-known example, many AI applications have been developed for different purposes (see the comprehensive list referenced here). For educational purposes, it is helpful to distinguish between several categories of AI tools:

Text generators

(articles, essays, descriptions, feedback, conversations, etc.)



Image generators

(image editing and illustration)



Video generators

(creating videos from text or images)



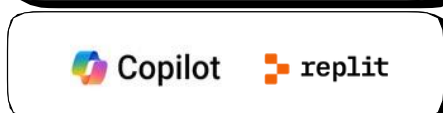
Audio generators

(sound effects and speech generation)



Code generators

(programming assistance)



Another essential concept is the **prompt**—the natural-language instruction that guides an AI system in producing a response. Educational research now recognises **prompt literacy** (Malloy & Gattupalli, 2023) as an important competency, referring to the effective and creative use of prompts. Closely related is **prompt engineering**, the process of refining and improving prompts to obtain more accurate, relevant, and personalised results.

Why should teachers pay attention to prompting? Because prompts reveal the human contribution to AI-assisted work: the user's intention, creativity, critical judgement, ongoing evaluation of AI-generated responses, and ability to provide meaningful feedback. A well-crafted prompt often demonstrates that a student has understood the task and can clearly articulate the information or support they need to solve a problem.

Equally important is what happens after the AI generates a response. Evaluating the output requires careful reading, identifying inaccuracies or gaps, comparing the response with the original task, and judging whether the result is appropriate and reliable. These are precisely the kinds of skills that strengthen students' critical thinking.



In education, Crăciun, Grosseck, and Istrate (2024) provide several simple prompt examples that you can practise with students in the classroom. These can be used for illustrative learning activities, self-assessment, peer assessment, or even while preparing your own lessons.

- “Correct the grammar in the following paragraph: [paragraph]” or “Write an ending for the following story...” (writing activities)
- “Explain [concept] in simple terms.” or “Use an analogy to explain this concept.” (learning and independent study)
- “Generate a multiple-choice quiz for students in [grade/subject] who have studied [unit, lesson, or book]. Provide the correct answer for each question.” or “Generate a list of five project ideas that could be used to assess [topic or competency].” (assessment)

There are also several useful principles and frameworks for writing effective prompts that you can use in your own practice and introduce to your students. Aim to be as clear and specific as possible, use simple language, eliminate ambiguity, and break complex tasks into smaller, manageable steps. One helpful framework is the **PARTS model** (Persona - the role you adopt; Aim - your objective; Recipients - your intended audience; Theme - the context, tone, and style; and Structure - the desired output format). Students can apply this framework when writing articles, emails, project presentations, or essays. [Google](#) also provides additional guidance and alternative prompt-writing frameworks.

For activities involving research, written assignments, or project work, encourage students not only to practise prompting but also to critically evaluate AI-generated responses. It is equally important that they understand the limitations of AI systems.

AI tools such as ChatGPT (OpenAI), Copilot (Microsoft), Claude (Anthropic), Gemini (Google DeepMind), LLaMA (Meta), and Perplexity AI **are large language models (LLMs)** that generate responses using patterns learned from training data, including publicly available internet content, books, digitised materials, and, in some cases, user-provided information. Perplexity AI also incorporates a search engine and places greater emphasis on citing sources, although these sources may still contain errors. Other AI tools can also provide references when prompted, but regardless of the platform, there is always a possibility that some sources will be inaccurate or fabricated. Although these systems are continuously improving, the risk of receiving incorrect or difficult-to-verify information remains significant unless both teachers and students verify the sources themselves. One useful classroom activity is to ask students to identify and correct errors in AI-generated texts. To recognise inaccuracies, they must first understand the subject matter themselves.

AI systems may also produce hallucinations-a term used to describe plausible but false or fabricated information generated by AI-particularly in tasks involving factual research or image generation. Discuss with your students whether the time spent checking and correcting AI-generated outputs outweighs the benefits, or whether more traditional research and creative processes might sometimes be more effective. Together, you could create a table listing the advantages and disadvantages of using AI for different learning tasks, especially those where students tend to rely heavily on AI tools.

As an alternative classroom activity, teachers and students can submit the same prompt to several AI platforms and compare the results. This allows students to observe differences in source citation, interpretation, summarisation, accuracy, and potential distortion of information.

Recommended learning scenarios for using ChatGPT and other AI tools

Different learning scenarios are particularly well suited to the use of AI. According to Bender (2023), AI can be especially valuable when learning materials are easy to verify, when responses can be checked against teacher-provided sources, or when AI helps students complete routine tasks that do not require originality or the rapid development of new competencies.

Students can use AI tools as learning partners-to ask follow-up questions about concepts they find difficult, brainstorm ideas, or check their understanding of a topic. One of the greatest advantages of AI in education is its potential to support personalised learning by providing immediate feedback. For example, students learning a foreign language might ask, “How do you say [word/phrase] in French?” or “Is the following sentence appropriate in a formal context?” They can also use AI to review classroom assignments, for example by asking, “Check whether the following summary of [source] is accurate and complete,” or “Suggest improvements that would help this summary better meet the assignment requirements.”

AI can also support formative assessment by checking objective tasks, such as mathematics or programming exercises, but it should never replace your explanations or guidance as a teacher. Regardless of the activity, it is important to weigh both the benefits and the limitations of AI-ideally together with your students. Students’ cognitive effort, their ability to self-evaluate, identify mistakes, and analyse reasoning should be continuously developed rather than delegated to AI.

You can also help students develop critical AI literacy by analysing prompts, editing them, and evaluating AI-generated responses. This allows students to understand the importance of defining clear learning objectives and recognising the knowledge and skills they themselves need to contribute in order to achieve meaningful learning outcomes.

For example, in a social studies lesson, students could write prompts asking about local customs or cultural traditions. Together, you can evaluate whether the AI-generated responses provide sufficient information or whether additional prompts are needed to produce richer and more accurate descriptions. Students could then use these descriptions to create drawings-or generate representative images-of the chosen tradition, and the best results could be presented and discussed in class.

Another effective strategy is to divide a learning task into several stages, with some completed using AI and others completed collaboratively with the teacher through discussion, verification, and clarification. In a history lesson, for example, students might ask ChatGPT to list ten reasons why the Ottoman Empire did not conquer the Romanian Principalities. Once the list has been generated, invite students to evaluate each point using their prior knowledge, logical reasoning, and an understanding of historical causality.

Clarify misconceptions where necessary, then ask students to request the sources used by the AI. Together, evaluate whether these sources are credible, incomplete, biased, or even propagandistic. In this way, students experience the complete process of verifying and critically evaluating AI-generated information.

Keep up to date with publications from institutions and organisations involved in teacher professional development and curriculum design for guidance on integrating AI into teaching practice. Several initiatives already provide lesson plans and classroom activities focused on AI, such as [The AI Education Project](#), whose resources can be incorporated into advisory classes, ICT, digital education, or social studies lessons. The British Council has also published [ten AI-based learning scenarios](#) specifically designed for English language teachers (British Council, 2024).



How do you address the unethical use of AI?

Perhaps the greatest risk associated with students' use of AI is the **erosion of trust** - first and foremost, your trust in students' ability to complete learning tasks independently and demonstrate their own competencies. If a student relies on AI to produce work that they present as their own, it becomes impossible to assess their actual learning progress.

At the same time, this behaviour is not new. AI has simply made it easier and more accessible. Teachers, schools, and parents all share the responsibility of helping students develop values such as academic integrity, transparency, and proper source attribution when creating written or multimedia content.

Scenario. Students are assigned a homework essay designed to help them apply newly acquired knowledge. While reviewing the assignments, you notice that several essays are almost too polished, and many share remarkably similar structure, style, and content. After asking a few follow-up questions, you realise that the students' understanding does not match what they submitted. You conclude that they relied almost entirely on AI to complete the assignment.

Suggested response. The appropriate response depends on the learning objectives of the assignment.

If the homework was intended primarily as a learning activity rather than a formal assessment, consider informing parents about the situation. If your main objective is for students to acquire knowledge and develop competencies, you can verify their learning during a subsequent in-class assessment. However, it is important that parents understand that the learning process has been interrupted or compromised.

If your goal is specifically to assess students' ability to write an essay, this assessment should take place in the classroom under supervised conditions, where the learning environment can be controlled and access to AI tools or other technologies can be restricted.

If students use AI during an assessment without the teacher's explicit permission, the work may be treated in the same way as any other form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty, in accordance with the school's academic integrity and assessment policies.

Assessment can also be redesigned so that it relies less on tasks that AI can complete immediately, or so that AI is intentionally integrated into certain stages of the learning process. Crăciun, Grosseck, and Istrate (2024) identify three approaches to rethinking assessment in the age of AI:

- **Avoiding AI** - This approach involves returning to more traditional forms of assessment, such as summative assessments conducted entirely in the classroom. While this limits students' access to AI tools, it may also reduce the authenticity of assessment and the educational benefits of completing work independently, at home, in students' own learning environments and at their own pace.
- **Adapting to AI** - This approach involves redesigning assessments so that they are more difficult to complete using AI alone. However, such solutions may only be temporary given the rapid pace of AI development, and they may also create inequalities, as some students will inevitably find ways to use AI more effectively than others.
- **Adopting AI** - This approach requires a fundamental redesign of assessment so that AI becomes an integral part of the assessment process. While this is the most challenging option to implement-requiring additional effort from teachers-it also calls for careful academic and social evaluation of both the risks and the benefits of using AI in teaching and learning.

The following principles can help guide the ethical use of AI by teachers (British Council, 2024):

1. Keep people at the centre. Teachers and students should retain ownership of decision-making, creativity, and learning. AI should support-not replace-human judgement and critical thinking. Encourage students to use AI in an informed and reflective way, and discuss the potential effects of excessive reliance on AI, including reduced opportunities to develop intuition, memory, and critical thinking skills (Lee et al., 2025).

2. Respect intellectual property and privacy. Protect your own data and avoid uploading copyrighted materials or personal information to AI tools. Make sure students know that many AI platforms allow users to opt out of having their prompts and data used to train future models. Encourage them to review these privacy settings to better protect their identity and personal information.

3. Be aware of bias and ethical issues¹. Critically evaluate AI-generated content to ensure that it does not contain stereotypes, bias, or discriminatory language. Always verify both its accuracy and its suitability for the intended context. AI systems generate responses using information available online, which may be incomplete, culturally biased, or influenced by the region in which it was produced. Encourage students not only to fact-check AI-generated information but also to analyse it critically in terms of its language, perspective, assumptions, and broader context.

4. Be transparent. Both teachers and students should disclose when and how AI has been used. Whenever appropriate, identify the AI tool and, ideally, the model or version used. Many AI systems can generate voices, images, and videos that imitate real people. While these technologies offer valuable creative and educational opportunities, they also raise important ethical and legal questions. Encourage students to use these tools responsibly and to clearly label AI-generated content whenever it is shared or presented.

5. Respect age restrictions. Always check the terms of service for the AI tools you recommend. Some platforms do not allow users under the age of 13 to create accounts, while others require parental consent for younger users.

6. Seek support when needed. Use AI responsibly, with respect for safety, privacy, and ethical practice. If you need additional guidance, consult trusted institutions and organisations working in digital education and AI governance, such as the [European Commission](#), national regulatory authorities, or specialised non-governmental organisations, including [Mediawise Society](#) and the [Association for Technology and Internet](#) (ApTI).

Further reading on AI in education:

- UNESCO (2023). [Guidance for generative AI in education and research](#)
- [EU Artificial Intelligence Act](#) (2024)
- Furze, L. (2024). [Teaching AI Ethics: Practical Strategies for Discussing AI Ethics in K-12 and Tertiary Education](#).
- OECD (2025). [Empowering Learners for the Age of AI. An AI Literacy Framework for Primary and Secondary Education](#).

3. How do you motivate students?

Using teaching materials that reflect students' interests, media habits, and favourite forms of content is an effective way to engage them in reflection, open discussion, and creative activities.

¹ For example, you can draw on the assessment methods recommended by the [eMerge media literacy platform](#).



Some students may initially feel uncomfortable discussing topics such as gender representation, their own media consumption, popular culture, or more controversial socio-political issues. However, when given the opportunity to participate in constructive dialogue, many students gradually take on the role of active contributors and mediators in classroom discussions, learning to listen to different perspectives and recognise their value.

Across the projects² in which Mediawise Society has developed media literacy methods and educational resources, scenario-based learning has consistently been the preferred instructional approach. This model effectively supports active learning strategies such as problem-based learning, case-based learning, and collaborative learning. Active learning is grounded in the idea that people develop deeper understanding and retain knowledge more effectively when learning is situated in meaningful contexts (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984; Jonassen, 1999; Hernandez-Serrano et al., 2022). These teaching approaches require additional preparation from teachers, but they also create greater opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and the shared construction of meaning.

When using scenario-based learning, teachers primarily act as facilitators rather than lecturers. Give yourself sufficient time to prepare meaningful learning experiences, and allow students the time they need to reflect, discuss, and create. You might begin with introductory icebreaker activities that help students feel comfortable while gradually introducing the issues explored in the lesson. Drawing on students' own experiences is another effective way to introduce or explore concepts that may initially be unfamiliar. This makes it easier for students to engage with classroom activities and integrate new knowledge into their existing understanding.

Scenario-based learning depends on active student participation. Students should play a central role in the learning process rather than simply receiving information. One way to achieve this is by creating a learning environment that offers meaningful choices. Giving students choices allows them to influence both what they learn and how they learn it. It promotes learner autonomy by enabling students to select from different resources, formats, or learning pathways. Together, you can explore their interests while gradually broadening them through new perspectives and experiences.

You can also encourage students to choose the format of their projects, work at their own pace where appropriate, and rely on your guidance through mentoring and facilitation rather than direct instruction.

²[Teachers 4.0 Digital](#), [eMerge - e-Media Education about Representations of Gender](#), [Mind Over Media - Analyzing Contemporary Propaganda](#)

Activities that promote communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving are particularly effective in increasing student engagement and motivation.

Videos, case studies, role-playing activities, and interactive tools such as Kahoot! and Mentimeter can also be highly effective.

For example, the pilot implementation of the eMerge project in Italy demonstrated the importance of involving students directly in decision-making. Allowing students to choose the topics, learning materials, teaching approaches, and media production tools made the learning process more engaging and effective. In Romania, teachers involved in the same project reported that students collaborated more effectively, were more willing to participate in debates and open discussions, responded positively to the learning materials, and showed genuine interest in discussing controversial issues.

As you probably already know, **constructive feedback** is a powerful strategy for building students' confidence, increasing their motivation to participate, and helping them develop essential life skills. The eMerge learning scenarios encourage students to practise giving and receiving constructive criticism as part of the learning process. At the same time, some students may initially perceive feedback from teachers or classmates as personal criticism and become defensive. In these situations, it can be helpful to dedicate time to a short discussion about what constructive feedback is and why it matters. Emphasise that effective feedback focuses on describing performance and suggesting ways to improve rather than judging the person.

Following the pilot implementation of the eMerge learning scenarios, one Romanian teacher observed that an important objective of the scenario used in her classroom was to encourage students to step outside their comfort zones and practise giving constructive criticism and feedback. During the peer-assessment activity, students were initially reluctant to critique one another's media productions-in this case, memes designed to challenge gender stereotypes in popular culture. Gradually, however, with their teacher's guidance and encouragement, they became more comfortable evaluating each other's work and learned from the experience.

Evaluations of the pilot phase also showed that active student participation often led to lively classroom discussions in which students shared personal experiences and expressed a range of perspectives. Some comments reflected existing stereotypes, while others demonstrated a genuine openness to dialogue free from prejudice. Students sometimes referred to experiences involving close friends or family members, and comparing perspectives occasionally created moments of discomfort or embarrassment. Despite these sensitive moments, the discussions never escalated into real conflict. Instead, disagreements were resolved through dialogue, often with students themselves playing an active role in mediating the conversation.

Engaging students in creating alternative media representations can be challenging if either students or teachers lack digital creative skills or if access to computer labs and digital equipment is limited. Talk openly with your students about these limitations and, whenever possible, seek support from colleagues or external professionals. Remember that creative work requires time. You may also wish to introduce discussions about copyright and the legal use of images and other media. If you do not feel sufficiently

confident teaching these topics yourself, consider inviting a media or copyright professional to speak with your students.

4. How do you address sensitive topics?

When discussing sensitive or controversial issues in the classroom, two principles are particularly important.

1. Foster an open classroom climate. Create a learning environment in which students feel comfortable expressing their opinions, even when those opinions differ from those of their classmates or the teacher. From the outset, intentionally expose students to a diversity of perspectives on the topic being discussed. This encourages respectful dialogue, critical reflection, and an appreciation of complexity rather than simple, one-sided answers.

2. View the classroom as a miniature democracy. Think of the classroom as a space where democratic practices are experienced rather than simply taught. In this model, the teacher does not take sides or promote ideological viewpoints, but instead strives to remain as impartial as possible while helping students develop their capacity for democratic deliberation-the ability to express informed opinions, evaluate evidence, consider different perspectives, and make reasoned decisions on political and social issues. Through this process, students learn what democracy looks like in practice and gain a deeper understanding of the role that media and communication play in the life of an informed and engaged citizen (Alstein, 2019).

Strategies for facilitating critical discussions on sensitive or controversial topics

The more prepared you are to facilitate discussions on controversial issues, the better equipped your students will be to navigate similar conversations in their everyday lives-with family members, friends, on social media, and in the public debates they will encounter throughout their lives. Whether the issues are socially, politically, or personally sensitive, the ability to engage in respectful and informed discussion develops over time and is an essential skill for both personal and professional life.

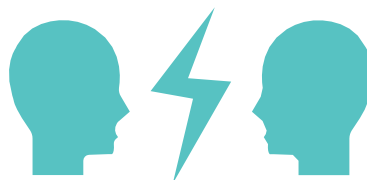
Address differences openly. Acknowledge from the outset that differences of opinion are natural and expected. Help students understand that people may hold different views because of their values, beliefs, experiences, cultural backgrounds, or ideological perspectives. Normalising disagreement creates a safer environment for dialogue and encourages students to engage with different viewpoints respectfully.

Establish a clear structure. Discussions on sensitive topics benefit from careful facilitation. A clear structure helps keep conversations focused on the intended learning objectives while preventing discussions from drifting too far from the lesson's purpose within the available time. Without such structure, students may miss the key concepts and competencies the activity is designed to develop.

Consider establishing ground rules together with your students before beginning the discussion. These might include mutual respect, active listening, staying on topic, and prohibiting insults, discriminatory language, or personal attacks. Such agreements help create a classroom where everyone feels safe to participate. At the same time, students learn that freedom of expression comes with responsibilities toward others.

Use semantic clarification. One effective way to address discriminatory or ideologically charged language is to begin by clarifying the meaning of the terms being used. Prepare in advance by consulting dictionaries and relevant academic sources, and present students with several possible definitions of key concepts. Invite them to compare these definitions, select the one they consider most appropriate, and explain their reasoning. As a class, you may agree on a shared working definition for the discussion, while recognising that concepts can be understood differently depending on disciplinary perspectives and social contexts. Exposure to multiple definitions encourages nuance and helps students recognise the complexity of public debates.

Encourage evidence-based argumentation. When students express problematic opinions or raise difficult questions, respond by encouraging reasoned argument rather than confrontation. You can build on values that the class broadly shares, such as the fundamental principle of non-discrimination. Different argumentative strategies may also be useful. For example, a slippery slope argument can help students consider the broader implications of a particular position, while an argument by substitution-replacing one form of oppression with another to reveal underlying patterns of injustice-can encourage students to reflect on historical struggles, such as the feminist movements that secured many of the rights and freedoms women enjoy today. Hypothetical questions and humour can also promote critical distance. Asking questions such as “How might an alien observer interpret the way our society works?” invites students to step outside their own assumptions and examine social norms from a fresh perspective.



Challenge harmful statements. The third strategy is more sensitive and should generally be used as a last resort, when the conditions for a calm and constructive discussion are no longer in place. It involves directly challenging discriminatory or harmful statements. Consider the following example: a student claims that a girl wearing a short skirt deserves to be harassed. In this situation, it is helpful to respond in three steps:

1. Ask the student to clarify what they mean. Encourage them to make their assumptions explicit. In this example, the student is implying that wearing a short skirt invites harassment and that the girl is therefore responsible for the abuse she experiences.

2. Do not endorse discriminatory attitudes. If you identify a sexist attitude, as in the example above, it is important to make it clear that such views are not acceptable. This also helps ensure that the classroom

remains a safe space for students who may feel threatened or uncomfortable because of discriminatory language or attitudes.

3. Provide an educational response. Your response will depend on several factors, including the time available, your own level of confidence in addressing the issue, and the support available within your school. If you do not feel prepared to provide a thorough educational explanation, it is also appropriate to pause or end the discussion in order to protect students who may be negatively affected by discriminatory remarks. You can always return to the topic later using a different strategy or with additional support.

Scenario. Another situation you may encounter is one in which tensions escalate quickly during a classroom discussion. Differences in values or opinions become emotionally charged, leading to raised voices, mutual accusations, or conflict between groups of students.

Suggested response. First, assess the situation carefully. Consider whether students are violating the classroom rules that were previously agreed upon or broader educational values such as respect and non-discrimination.

Next, determine whether the discussion can be de-escalated and redirected into a constructive exchange. Draw attention to comments that cross established boundaries and remind students of the agreed rules for discussion. Depending on the time available and students' willingness to continue respectfully, you may either pause the conversation and return to it in a future lesson or ask a series of open-ended questions that encourage students to reflect on how emotions and reactions can influence the quality of a debate. This also gives students the opportunity to feel heard while restoring a respectful classroom climate.

Prioritise students' well-being. In some situations, students in your classroom may be personally affected by the social or political issues represented in the case studies you choose. Before planning an activity, consider the needs of those students, recognising that their physical and emotional safety should always come first.

Other important needs may include feeling heard and understood, feeling supported and accepted, and knowing that their experiences and opinions matter. Choose case studies carefully, taking into account the composition of your class, and be prepared to adapt activities to meet your students' needs.

You can also involve parents through meetings, workshops, or short online questionnaires to better understand students' personal contexts and needs. By inviting parents to contribute ideas about media literacy topics that are relevant and worth discussing in the classroom, you are more likely to gain their trust, support, and engagement.

5. How do you find suitable case studies for teaching media literacy?

You don't need to know everything!

You will often find that your students' media consumption is different from your own. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 primarily use YouTube, WhatsApp, and Roblox (CJI, 2025). Lower secondary students tend to prefer WhatsApp, YouTube, and TikTok, while upper secondary students most frequently use Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok. Different age groups are often associated with different media and cultural preferences.

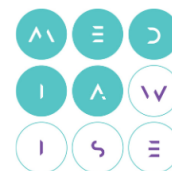
This can be both an advantage and a challenge. On the one hand, your students can introduce you to a wide variety of media content and resources. On the other hand, you may encounter media practices, online discourses, social groups, influencers, and cultural references that you, as a teacher, may not know or fully understand. Their cultural tastes and habits may sometimes differ from or even conflict with your own values, generational experiences, or media preferences. This is why it is important to approach your students with curiosity and empathy, learning about their media culture so that you can later incorporate it into your teaching.

Talk to your students about their media culture. Try to engage them in open discussions and learn from one another. Make sure they understand that the classroom is a safe and welcoming space where they can talk about media culture without fear of **judgement**. Reflect on your own values and preferences, and be open to new perspectives in order to better understand your students.

At the same time, try to choose case studies that interest you as well, so that you feel comfortable teaching the topic. For example, you could ask students to create rankings of their favourite TV series, podcasts, influencers, or online creators, and dedicate one or two introductory activities to discussing them through conversation, group presentations, or the analysis of excerpts selected by the students.

You might start a discussion by asking questions such as "Which influencers do we follow, and why?" or ask students about their favourite TV series or games: "How much time do you spend watching this series?", "What makes you keep watching?" (for example, the main character, the storyline, the atmosphere, curiosity, and so on). If you wish, you can even choose one of the media products that is popular among your students, explore it yourself, and then design analytical activities using the methods introduced in the Mediawise Teacher programme.

Break the ice. If you notice that students are reluctant to share what they watch or enjoy in media and popular culture, be the first to bring popular media genres into your teaching and assessment. For example, you can use memes or short humorous or parody videos from YouTube or other platforms in your lessons. This shows students that you do not judge these forms of media, but rather recognise their value—whether for entertainment, information, social commentary, or identity-building within their online communities.



You can also use project-based assessment, asking students to adapt a literary text, create a visual essay on a historical or civic topic, produce a social issues report, or prepare a short biography of a scientist using different media formats such as videos, animations, mashups, memes, comics, posters, or any other format that is familiar and accessible to them.

Give students autonomy. Allow students to take greater ownership of their learning by involving them in the selection of classroom resources, case studies, and project topics. When time and resources allow, you can use the flipped classroom approach or project-based learning, encouraging students to research topics at home and present curriculum content through the media they engage with every day-video games, films, television series, music, or social media.

For example, when teaching concepts such as vocabulary, context, narrative, subjective and objective perspective, or genre, students could give a 5-10 minute presentation explaining how these concepts appear in their favourite video games.

If you teach Computer Science or ICT, students could investigate the databases behind their favourite websites or explore concepts such as networks and algorithms by examining how social media platforms are designed. You could also invite them to deliver short demonstrations for their classmates on topics such as photo or video editing software or methods for verifying AI-generated content, followed by teacher-led discussions on copyright, image licensing, and source attribution.

6. How do you measure learning progress?

As a teacher participating in the Mediawise Teacher programme, you have access to a range of methods and tools for assessing media literacy competencies, both through the training programme itself and through the professional community, where we share high-quality resources published and validated by experts in the field.

Developing media literacy means helping learners build a critical understanding of how media function within society and enabling them to use media more responsibly, recognising its active role in shaping a democratic, pluralistic, and connected society. This section provides a theoretical framework for mapping and assessing media literacy competencies (including digital competencies), as well as for designing assessment tools and methods. It also includes several practical examples and activities.

Any attempt to map and assess media literacy should begin with the teaching and learning model introduced during the Mediawise Teacher training programme. We recommend the Problem-Posing Spiral, developed by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970, 1973), which has influenced many contemporary models of media literacy education, including the one used in the Mediawise Teacher programme.

According to this model, complex topics or concepts should be divided into five short learning stages. Each stage stimulates different cognitive and affective processes, helping learners build new knowledge on the basis of prior experience and, ultimately, move towards action. If you use this model to design your media literacy lessons and assessment strategies, it will provide a strong framework for both teaching and learning.



How to apply the problem-posing spiral in a media literacy lesson

Stage 1: Start with students' experiences and prior knowledge (Thematization)

Students take part in an activity that encourages them to reflect on their own experiences and discover new insights-moments that make them think, "I had never thought about that before." For example, they could compare their own family with the one portrayed in traditional Barilla advertisements. They could also keep a media diary for one day, from the moment they wake up until they go to bed, to become more aware of the many different forms of media they interact with in their daily lives and why. Teachers participating in the Mediawise Teacher programme can use the Media Consumption Diary worksheet developed for this activity.

Stage 2: Identify and analyse patterns (Encoding)

Students analyse media using the six key concepts-or dimensions-of media literacy introduced in [Module 1](#), Unit 1 of the freely available asynchronous eMerge course: categories, producers, audiences, technologies, languages, and representations.

For example, they might ask questions such as:

- How does the camera angle influence the way we feel about the product being advertised?
- How would the advertisement change if the girl were wearing a coat instead of a swimsuit?
- What assumptions do we make about a character based on their clothing, make-up, or jewellery?
- How does the music contribute to the mood or message of the story?
- What can we infer about the creator of this cartoon?

Stage 3: Introduce New Knowledge and Theory to Reflect on the Patterns Identified (Decoding and Critical Dialogue)

In the third stage, students are encouraged to reflect more deeply by placing what they have learned in the previous stages into a broader context. Depending on the topic, they may consider philosophical or cultural traditions, ethical values, social justice, or democratic principles as frameworks for making individual and collective decisions.

For example, students might ask questions such as:

- Is it fair for news programmes to interview only government representatives?
- How are citizens' rights overlooked in certain media representations?
- What is the role of the independent authority that regulates the media in my country?
- How do commercial interests shape media content?
- What are the consequences of media production being driven by commercial interests?
- How else could the action hero have solved the problem? Could the hero have been a woman instead?

Stage 4: Practise New Skills Creatively and Develop an Action Plan (Praxis - Action)

Stages Four and Five give students the opportunity to develop ideas for creative action and bring them into the public sphere. This is the stage where they move from reflection to action-where they learn by doing, both individually and collaboratively.

It is important to remember, however, that taking action does not necessarily require sophisticated technology or professional expertise. In fact, the most meaningful and lasting actions are often simple activities that reflect a deeper internal awareness and understanding.

Stage 5: Share What You Have Learned (Praxis - Reflection)

Some examples of practical activities include:

- After analysing and reflecting on hate speech on social media, students could write a “Ten Principles for Respectful Communication” and display it on the school's noticeboard and website for the wider school community.
- They could create a blog to share their research, perspectives, and reflections on female stereotypes in Disney films, video games, pop music, and other forms of media.
- They could write about the persuasive techniques (some of which are also explored in the section on contemporary propaganda) used by toy companies to promote sales through merchandise linked to animated films and television programmes.
- Students concerned about recent cases of cyberbullying in their school could interview teachers, parents, students, and experts to gather different perspectives and identify possible solutions.

Clearly, all of these activities involve interaction and collaboration with classmates and other members of the community, the exchange of ideas, cooperative problem-solving, and the creation and dissemination of media content.

Mapping and assessing media literacy competencies



As with any other subject, assessing students’ work and measuring the competencies they develop are essential components of media literacy education. Regular feedback on their progress-as well as opportunities for self-assessment-helps students take greater responsibility for their own learning.

At the same time, many teachers find it more difficult to design assessment tools for media literacy than for other subjects. This may be because they feel they lack the technical expertise to assess students’ media productions-for example, the quality of a video edit or a photographic composition. Or it may be because they are unsure which competencies students should ultimately develop and, consequently, what kinds of questions and learning activities they should design.

As a result, assessment often focuses only on students’ final media products, while the learning process itself is only minimally assessed or documented. Moreover, how should we evaluate students’ media productions-such as a short video-if we are not media professionals? As Professor David Buckingham

argues, “comparison with the work of professionals” or evaluation by “expert juries,” as in a film festival, is inappropriate and misleading (Buckingham, 2003, p. 200), since the assessment criteria depend on the intended audience and the purpose of the media production.

To design meaningful, comprehensive, and objective assessment plans for media literacy, it is useful to consider two key steps:

- Define the media literacy competency framework you expect your students to achieve, while identifying connections with the competency frameworks used in other areas of the curriculum whenever possible.
- Develop assessment tools that allow you to evaluate students’ learning as effectively as possible, while clearly communicating your expectations from the outset.

Buckingham’s framework for mapping and assessing media literacy competencies

To develop a coherent assessment plan, you first need to define the competency framework you want your students to develop and demonstrate. According to a widely accepted definition, media literacy refers to “the ability to access the media, to understand and critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media content, and to create communications in a variety of contexts” (European Commission, 2009). This definition can be complemented by the ability to reflect on the impact of media on everyday life and to take individual or collaborative action through or within digital media (Hobbs, 2010, 2025).

Building on this definition, you can use David Buckingham’s framework for mapping and assessing media literacy competencies as the basis for developing your own assessment tools and procedures.

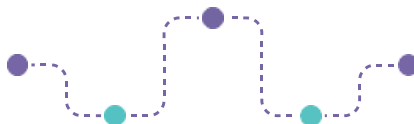
Once you have identified the competencies you want students to develop, the next step is to assess the extent to which they have achieved them. One way to do this is by using either quantitative or qualitative assessment criteria. For example, you might adopt a four-level scale:

- Level 4 - Highly Competent
- Level 3 - Competent
- Level 2 - Partially Competent
- Level 1 - Beginning

You can then develop both formative and summative assessment tools to measure students’ knowledge and skills. Self-assessment and peer-assessment forms, learning reflections, written assignments, observation grids, checklists, and rubrics are all useful instruments that can be adapted to media literacy activities. The following sections present some of these tools in greater detail and suggest ways they can be applied in the media literacy classroom.

Examples of assessment tools for media literacy

If, for example, you want to teach primary or lower secondary students about the aesthetic differences between various media forms and channels, you can draw inspiration from the [MediaSmarts lesson plan](#) “Every Medium Has Its Own Unique Aesthetic.”



The assessment consists of a practical activity in which students work together to create a public service announcement (for example, “Cross the street only at pedestrian crossings after checking both directions” or “Put your waste in the correct bin. Small actions make a big difference for the planet,” or another familiar public message). They must then decide where it should be published: on television, on social media, on a specific platform, or as a printed poster.

After first analysing and discussing examples of public service announcements presented in different media formats, students learn to identify the strengths and limitations of each medium for a particular purpose.

Through this practical activity, you can observe whether students ask the right questions when selecting the most appropriate medium. You can guide them to research unfamiliar media or learn from classmates who are more familiar with particular platforms. The activity also allows you to assess both students’ factual knowledge and their ability to adapt a message to the characteristics and aesthetics of a particular medium.

If we follow Freire’s model, the five stages of the lesson would look like this:

1. Start with students’ experiences and prior knowledge. Begin with a few examples of public service announcements and invite students to identify their themes (health, environmental protection, safety, etc.). You can discuss other useful messages they have encountered or ask what messages they would like to communicate to society or to adults to help create a cleaner, fairer, or better community.

2. Identify and analyse patterns. Next, analyse these messages together. Explore how they are written, how concise they are, whether they use text alone or also images and video, where they are published, and who their intended audience might be depending on the medium.

3. Introduce new knowledge to reflect on the patterns identified. Use supporting materials, such as short texts or interactive videos, to explore the aesthetic differences between different media forms. Invite students to reflect on questions such as: How does the chosen medium shape the audience’s experience? What is the purpose of the message? What advantages does one medium have over another for communicating the message effectively and persuasively?

4. Develop an action plan. Organise students into groups and ask them to choose a public service message they would like to communicate using either traditional or digital media. Invite each group to list the media channels they know and identify the advantages and disadvantages of using each one for their chosen message.

5. Share what you have learned. Each group presents its message and explains the chosen distribution channel, highlighting its advantages (such as context, target audience, cost, aesthetics, or any other relevant considerations). Stages 4 and 5 serve both as creative learning activities and as assessment opportunities, allowing you to evaluate students' knowledge and the extent to which they understand the aesthetic differences between different media forms.

A second example, suitable for primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary students, is a [MediaSmarts assessment rubric](#) that combines qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate learning about representation in video games.

Using a form of media that students of all ages enjoy, you can build on their prior knowledge while developing the analytical and creative skills introduced in the lesson "First Person." Students learn about stereotypes, the aesthetics and genres of video games, their commercial dimensions, and the effects of stereotypical representations in games.

As a final creative activity, students are asked to develop a concept for an alternative video game, outlining its purpose, structure, characters, challenges related to stereotypes, and game setting. The accompanying worksheet clearly states the learning objectives so that students understand from the outset what is expected of them. The proposed game concepts are then assessed using both qualitative and quantitative criteria, focusing on:

Students' knowledge and understanding of diversity issues and video game genres (qualitative assessment).

Their research and analytical skills, specifically: a) how diversity is represented in video games; and b) how commercial pressures and the characteristics of different media and game genres influence production (qualitative and quantitative assessment).

Their ability to apply their knowledge and skills by using genre conventions to communicate their understanding and analysis through the game concept they create (qualitative and quantitative assessment).

Pre- and Post-Assessments

Like rubrics, pre- and post-assessments are traditional methods of measuring learning. The purpose of a pre-assessment is to evaluate students' prior knowledge, attitudes, and understanding of the media literacy learning objectives before instruction begins, providing a baseline for planning learning activities. Prior knowledge can also be explored through less structured methods, such as brainstorming discussions.

A post-assessment measures whether students have improved their understanding and application of key media literacy concepts as a result of the analytical and creative activities included in the lesson.

Assessment questions might focus on:

1. Students' understanding of media and how media construct reality. For example: Do advertisements always show people and situations as they are in real life?

2. Students' ability to apply media literacy concepts to different types of media content. For example: Who is the target audience for this cartoon? (where audience is the media literacy concept being assessed).

3. Students' understanding of how media systems operate. For example: Television programmes appear to be free, but who ultimately pays for them? How do commercial television and radio broadcasters make a profit? How does this differ from a public service broadcaster?

4. Students' understanding of their own relationship with media and its influence on their lives. For example: How important is it for me to wear the clothes recommended by my favourite social media influencer?

Including these types of questions allows you to assess both content knowledge and process competencies. Keeping the results of the pre-assessment (or brainstorming activities) and comparing them with the post-assessment results can help you measure students' progress over time.

Another example of a self-assessment tool is the set of rubrics developed by Maria Ranieri in the [Digital and Media Literacy Education Toolkit](#) (2013). One of the toolkit units focuses on privacy. In one activity, students create a glossary of key terms and then assess their own learning using a self-assessment rubric.

In another activity, students evaluate their own work after creating an online privacy guide for users. Since all of the activities involve group work, these rubrics can easily be adapted for peer assessment.

Finally, the e-Media Education Lab provides teachers with an assessment [toolkit](#) containing a range of evaluation instruments. The tools designed to assess media literacy competencies are organised into three categories: systematic analysis, classification, and comparison. They combine open-ended, subjective questions with more structured items that teachers can adapt to their own learning objectives and classroom needs.

7. You can make a difference-but not alone

Having the support of your colleagues and your school makes a real difference. Ideally, media literacy should be approached as a whole-school effort, involving parents and clearly explaining why the school considers media literacy an essential part of students' education. Since these activities are often not explicitly included in the curriculum, institutional support is essential.

Support can take many forms. For example, schools can adopt policies that encourage collaboration between teachers. If you do not have the digital media production skills needed for a particular activity, consider working with a colleague who has the relevant expertise.

Support from NGOs can also help you teach more complex topics with confidence. In Romania, for example, teachers can work with the [Association for Technology and Internet \(ApTI\)](#) on topics related to digital rights and responsibilities, or with organisations from the [Coalition for Gender Equality](#) when addressing gender stereotypes in the media.

The school librarian or teacher-librarian can also be a valuable partner. They can help you identify educational resources or provide additional space for practical activities, such as exhibitions of students' media productions, peer-assessment sessions, or debates involving students from different classes.

When planning to use the eMerge learning scenarios, try to avoid particularly busy periods of the school year, such as examination periods. It is also helpful to secure the support of the school principal, particularly when you need equipment, learning spaces, or assistance from ICT teachers.

Support from school leaders, public authorities, and parents is essential for establishing media literacy as a recognised and valued part of the curriculum. Teachers who collaborate across subjects on media literacy activities-such as those developed through the eMerge project-often report higher levels of motivation because they see this work not only as part of their professional role within the school, but also as a form of grassroots advocacy that contributes to society more broadly.

Where possible, schools would also benefit from appointing staff members with a coordinating role within teacher professional development, curriculum, or subject committees. Their role is to support teachers in designing, implementing, evaluating, and documenting cross-curricular media literacy activities. These coordinators do not necessarily need to teach media literacy themselves; rather, they provide the organisational support that makes this work possible.

More than media literacy

When you bring contemporary topics from your students' media culture into the classroom-such as films, advertisements, television series, influencers, memes, digital communication practices, and their own media production-you enter their world and help them navigate it more responsibly. Rather than being an

authority they fear or avoid, you become a trusted guide who helps them make the most of their access to information and technology.



As a result, you are likely to see students become more engaged in learning, more receptive to new knowledge, and more willing to participate in classroom activities. The classroom dynamic also improves. This is consistently reflected in the feedback collected from teachers who have participated in Mediawise Society's professional development programmes, and students themselves report that they find the topics more relevant and meaningful. To achieve this, make use of the interactive teaching methods promoted by media literacy education and approach your students with openness, curiosity, and empathy. The field of media literacy continues to evolve, so stay connected with the Mediawise Teacher community and the Mediawise Society trainers for ongoing inspiration, resources, and support.

The [Mediawise Teacher](#) professional development programme in media literacy and digital culture is delivered by [Mediawise Society](#) with the support of the [Orange Foundation](#) through the [Digitaliada Platform](#). The programme responds to clearly identified needs among teachers, including the lack of practical teaching resources, the challenge of translating media literacy into meaningful classroom activities, and the need for sustained pedagogical support. Reflective practice, the cross-curricular integration of media literacy pedagogies, the development of critical thinking, awareness of the impact of technology, and professional collaboration are the core principles that shape the structure and philosophy of the Mediawise Teacher programme.

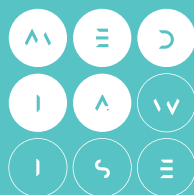
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