

Active Inoculation



Having students create disinformation is an effective way to inoculate them against it. This is called active inoculation.¹ For example, pupils can make up silly conspiracy theories and deceptive ad campaigns. Such exercises invite them to playfully deceive, which gets them thinking about the techniques bad actors use to fool people. A conversational debrief can help them draw the right conclusions.

Applications

- Teach students to look for clues that something might be manipulative.^{2,3,4} For example, “**angertainment**” is sensationalized news that deliberately stokes outrage. Have students create fake angertainment⁵ newscasts, then discuss them. *What works, and why?*⁶
- Have teams of students develop **pseudoscientific advertisements**.⁷
- Have them invent and defend **wacky conspiracy stories**. Explain that a true believer can always dismiss falsifying evidence by claiming it was planted by the conspirators.

Notes

Make it clear that you’re not encouraging deceptive messaging. Understanding tricky information is a powerful skill, and with great power comes great responsibility. We must all be guardians and seekers of the truth: we should call out misleading techniques, and never use them to mislead others.



Learn More

“Inoculating Students against Misinformation by Having Them Create It”⁷

¹ Journal of College Science Teaching, [Combining Different Inoculation Types to Increase Student Engagement and Build Resilience Against Science Misinformation](#)

² Psychology Today, [Disinformation Techniques: How to Spot Them](#)

³ NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, [Inoculation Theory and Misinformation](#)

⁴ [Inoculation Science - Video Resources](#)

⁵ Fearless Future on LinkedIn, [Rise of the Angertainment Economy](#)

⁶ Skeptical Inquirer, [Inoculating Students against Misinformation by Having Them Create It](#)

⁷ Thinking Is Power, [How to Sell Pseudoscience in 9 Easy Steps](#)