

# Technique-Based Inoculations



Technique-based inoculations empower students to identify persuasion strategies that are commonly used to mislead. Learning about emotional manipulation, for example, can confer a degree of immunity to it. Learning to recognize logical fallacies (the focus of a future post) can make you less susceptible to being fooled by them. Extensive research in psychological inoculation underscores the effectiveness of this approach.<sup>1</sup>

## Applications

- Teach students to recognize **common techniques** used in misinformation.<sup>2</sup> Start with humorous or non-triggering examples, then use real-world examples to illustrate how these techniques can distort truth.
- Have students **create their own misinformation** using known misleading techniques. This active inoculation<sup>3</sup> process reinforces their ability to recognize and resist such techniques in real situations.
- Have a classroom **discussion** in which students identify the techniques used by their classmates. Encourage students to name the techniques and explain why they can be effective at misleading people.



## Notes

Two experiments with hundreds of participants<sup>4</sup> demonstrate the power of technique-based inoculation. Participants who were informed about misleading techniques before being presented with misinformation were less likely to adopt the misinformation than participants who were not informed of the misleading techniques. The techniques used and inoculated against were false balance and fake experts.<sup>5</sup>

## Learn More

The [Bad News Game](#) teaches us to recognize deceptive techniques in a fun way.

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<sup>1</sup> *Foolproof: Why Misinformation Infects Our Minds and How to Build Immunity*, by Sander van der Linden.

<sup>2</sup> [Inoculation Science - Video](#) & [YourLogicalFallacyis.com](#)

<sup>3</sup> Skeptical Inquirer, [Inoculating Students Against Misinformation by Having Them Create It](#)

<sup>4</sup> PLOS ONE, [Neutralizing misinformation through inoculation](#)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid 4, false balance: "media coverage that evenly balances contrarian voices and expert views"; fake experts, example: "political operatives and lobbyists who dissent from the consensus in public discourse."