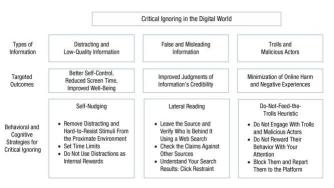# Critical Ignoring

Critical Ignoring involves strategically disregarding misleading and low-quality information and choosing which information to focus on. This competency is essential in the digital age, where the vastness of accessible information demands that we efficiently allocate our limited attention to stay informed and maintain mental immunity against manipulative content.[1]

Applications[2]

- Teach students to create a less distracting digital environment by utilizing **self-nudging**[3] strategies. Examples include setting time limits on social media, limiting notifications to reduce interruptions, and employing tools to block distracting websites. These things empower students to take control of their

digital spaces, enhancing focus and reducing the allure of low-quality information.

- Teach students **lateral reading**[4], which involves verifying the credibility of information by checking other reliable sources rather than solely relying on one source of information.

- Teach the **"Do Not Feed the Trolls" Heuristic**[5]: don't engage with online trolls and malicious actors who aim to disrupt and provoke. Teach students to block and report such individuals rather than retaliating. Blocking and reporting will deprive online trolls of the attention they seek, maintaining a healthier online environment.

Notes

"Critical" is a key modifier; we don't want to teach students to ignore information generally, as that would most likely reinforce cognitive biases. Importantly, critical ignoring is not just about avoiding misinformation but also about managing one's cognitive resources effectively.

Learn more

[To navigate the dangers of the web, you need critical thinking – but also critical ignoring](#)

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[1] When using the phrase "manipulative content" we're referring to both deliberately manipulative information, and information that may not be intentionally manipulative but is inherently manipulative insofar as it misleads or misdirects our critical thinking faculties.

[2] Current Directions in Psychological Science 2023, [Critical Ignoring as a Core Competence for Digital Citizens](#) (source of the above image); article also summarized here: [Forget Critical Thinking. It's Critical Ignoring That Will Keep You Sane](#) (Positive Prescription blog)

[3] Perspectives on Psychological Science 2017, [Nudging and Boosting: Steering or Empowering Good Decisions](#)

[4] Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education 2019, [Lateral reading and the nature of expertise: Reading less and learning more when evaluating digital information](#)

[5] The Conversation, ['Don't feed the trolls' really is good advice – here's the evidence](#)

[What Works to Build Mental Immunity](#) *a resource for teachers* by CIRCE