

Recycle This Trash That

Part of the media's job is to throw images at you to get you to react.

It's your job to screen what you see—to separate the positive from the negative, the helpful from the harmful, fact from fiction. When it comes to media and your life, it's up to you to screen out what's inaccurate or misleading, what might be making you believe something you really shouldn't believe.

Consider the Source

A classmate you barely know approaches you at school and whispers something about another girl—who happens to be your best friend! You know that something is just gossip; it's not true. But others don't know your friend the way you do.

Sometimes, media messages are no more trustworthy than your school's rumor mill. Yet you might assume that those expensive beauty products being advertised really remove acne overnight or that those ring tones are really free...but that may not be the case.

Ads are full of words that are meant to sell something, not words that present the facts. You can accept those messages or screen them out. Or you can take the matter into your own hands and learn the truth—the key is to consider the source! That doesn't sound too hard, until you consider how many ads are thrown at you each day...

Sound Bite

Urban legends and other misinformation

The Internet is a breeding ground for "urban legends," which are false stories told as if true. Next time you receive a text or e-mail about something that seems unbelievable, confirm it before you spread it.

The fact-checking site snopes.com investigates everything from urban legends to "news" articles and posts its findings. Media Matters for America (<http://mediamatters.org/>) gets the word out about media misinformation.