

Learner Full Name: _____ School: _____
Assigned Workstation: _____ Class: _____

Session 34: Social Media & Misinformation

TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and WhatsApp channels: millions of Ghanaians scroll through them every day. In Session 33 you learnt to protect your personal information and to T.H.I.N.K. before you post. Today you will look behind the screen: how an app decides what to show you, why fake news spreads so fast, how to check a viral post, what to do about cyberbullying, and how to keep social media healthy and fun. **You don't need a social media account for any of it.**

1. Plain Talk: The Seller Who Watches You

Imagine a clever kenkey seller at the lorry station. She notices that every time you pass, you slow down at the fried fish. The next day she puts fried fish right at the front of her table, where you will see it first. Soon you only ever see fried fish, even though she sells many other things.

A social media **feed** (the endless list of posts and videos you scroll through) works the same way. A computer program called an **algorithm** watches what you do, and keeps putting more of the same at the front of your feed.

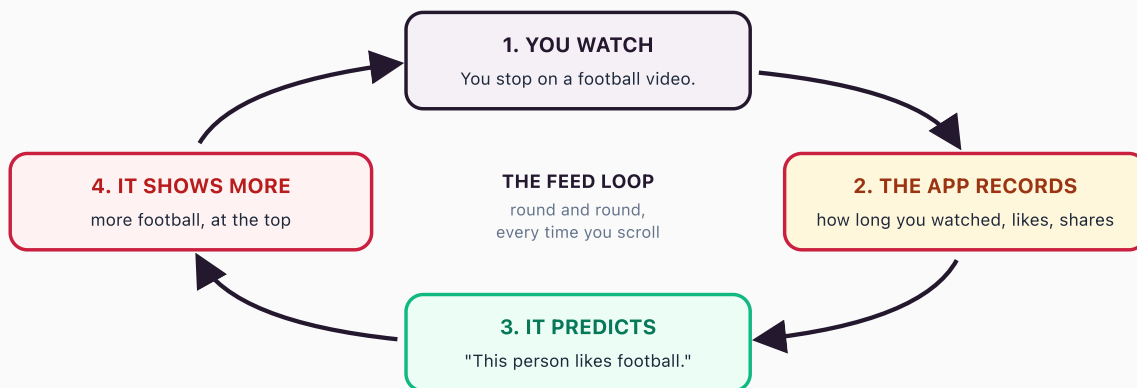


Figure 34.0: The feed loop. Every action you take teaches the algorithm what to show you next.

YOU WILL MEET THIS AGAIN IN SESSION 39

The feed is an AI that **predicts**: it learns from examples of what you watched, and guesses what will keep you scrolling. In Session 39 you will train an AI yourself and see how it learns patterns from examples.

1. The Clues the App Collects

The algorithm doesn't read your mind. It watches **signals**: small clues about what you like. The strongest signal is often simply **how long you watch**.

Signal	What it tells the app
🕒 Watch time	You watched the whole video, or watched it twice: "Show more like this."
❤️ Likes and comments	You reacted to it: it matters to you.
➦ Shares	You sent it to friends: it is worth spreading.
👤 Follows	You want more from this person or page.
⏮️ Scrolling past quickly	Not interested: show less of it.
🔍 Searches	What you looked for, and sometimes where you are and what time it is.

⚠️ WHY APPS WANT YOU TO KEEP SCROLLING

Most social media apps are free because they earn money from **adverts**. The longer you scroll, the more adverts you see. So the algorithm's job is to keep you watching, not to show you what is true or what is good for you.

2. Echo Chambers: Stuck in a Bubble

If you only ever see one kind of post, your feed becomes an **echo chamber**: a room where you only hear your own voice echoing back. You might start to believe that *everyone* thinks the same, or that a rumour must be true because you have seen it ten times.

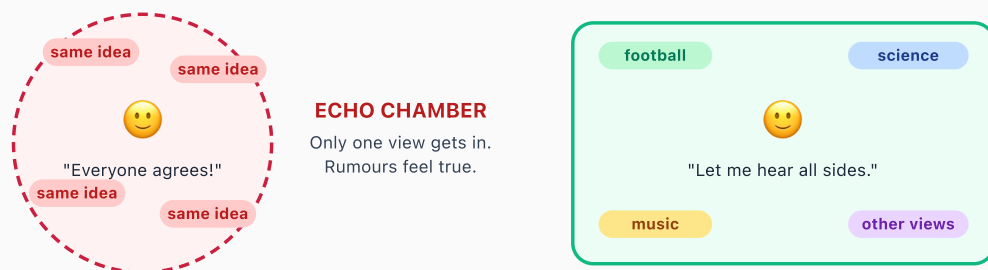


Figure 34.1: An echo chamber (left) versus a healthy, varied feed (right).

💡 HOW TO POP THE BUBBLE

Follow a mix of people and topics. Tap **"Not interested"** on things you don't want. Search for the other side of a story. Get news from trusted news organisations too, not only from your feed.

Your turn: Yaw watched three funny cat videos to the end last night. What will his feed probably show him today, and why?

1. Why Fake News Spreads So Fast

Misinformation is false information shared by people who think it is true. **Disinformation** is false information spread *on purpose*, to trick people or make money. Both spread fast for two reasons: **emotion** (shocking, scary or angry posts make us share without thinking) and **speed** (one tap sends it to a whole group).

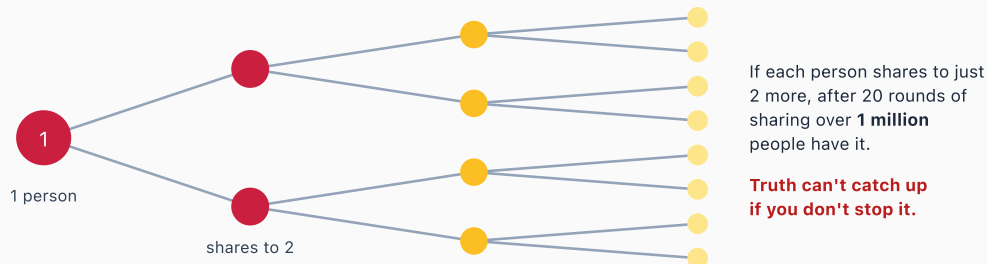


Figure 34.2: How one post becomes viral. Each forward doubles the number of people who see it.

2. Five Kinds of Fake

Made up (a story that never happened) · **Old photo, new story** (a real flood picture from years ago, shared as "today") · **Edited** (a photo or screenshot changed) · **Deepfake** (a video or voice made by AI; you will learn more in Session 40) · **Fake account** (a page pretending to be a famous person, school or news station).

3. Before You Share, W.A.I.T.

Letter	Ask yourself...
W – Who posted it?	A real news organisation or official account, or a page you have never heard of? Is the account new? Does the name look slightly wrong?
A – Anyone else reporting it?	Search for it. If it were true, would trusted news websites or the official organisation be saying it too? Or check a Ghanaian fact-checker such as GhanaFact or Dubawa Ghana.
I – Image check	Do a reverse image search (Session 12) to see if the picture is old or from somewhere else. Look for deepfake signs: odd hands, blurry edges, lips not matching the words.
T – Time and date	When was it posted? Is it an old story being shared again? Does it say "share before they delete it!"? That is pressure, not proof.

IF YOU ARE NOT SURE, DON'T SHARE

You never have to be first. If a post fails W.A.I.T., don't forward it, and if it is in a group, kindly say "*I checked: this isn't true*" and share the link that proves it.

1. Cyberbullying: What It Is and What To Do

Cyberbullying is using phones or the internet to hurt, scare or embarrass someone again and again: cruel messages, spreading rumours, sharing embarrassing photos, leaving someone out of a group on purpose, or pretending to be them. It is never the victim's fault.



Figure 34.3: Five steps if you, or someone you know, is being bullied online.

Important: if the post is a naked or sexual picture of anyone, do **NOT** screenshot, save or forward it. Report it and tell an adult straight away. Threats, blackmail or scams can be reported, with an adult, to Ghana's **Cyber Security Authority**: call or text **292**.

Be an upstander, not a bystander. If you see someone being bullied: don't like or share the cruel post, send the person a kind private message ("Are you okay? That wasn't fair"), report the post, and tell an adult.

2. Privacy Settings and Age Limits

Four settings to check (when you are old enough)

- **Private account:** only people you approve see your posts.
- **Who can message me:** friends only.
- **Location:** off, and don't tag where you are.
- **Tags:** approve posts others tag you in.

Why 13+?

Most platforms (TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and YouTube for your own account) say you must be **at least 13**, and some features are only for older users. The limits exist to protect children's data and safety. Lying about your age removes that protection.

3. Healthy Use: You Are in Charge, Not the App

Habit	Why it helps
 Set a time limit	Use <i>Digital Wellbeing</i> (Android) or <i>Screen Time</i> (iPhone) to see your hours and set limits.
 Screens off an hour before bed	Bright screens and exciting videos keep your brain awake. Sleep helps you learn.
 Remember the highlight reel	People post their best moments, often with filters. Comparing your whole life with their best day isn't fair to you.
 Turn off notifications	Fewer buzzes, fewer reasons to pick up the phone during homework.

Your turn: Write one healthy social media rule you could suggest to your family.

1. Mission 1: Feed Check (3D Lab)

Open the **Feed Check** 3D lab on your session page. Scroll a pretend social media feed: spot fake news, report bullying, fix privacy settings and see how the feed learns what you like. Write what happened:

In the lab	What I did or saw
A post I caught as fake, and the W.A.I.T. clue that gave it away	-----
What I did about the bullying comment	-----
How the feed changed after I watched one kind of post	-----

2. Mission 2: Check a Viral Post (Real Browser)

Your mentor has saved a picture on your desktop called **viral-flood.jpg**. It has been shared in a WhatsApp group with this message:

Forwarded many times

"BREAKING!!! This is Kaneshie RIGHT NOW. All schools in Accra closed tomorrow by order of the Ministry. Share to every parent before they delete it!!!" (from a page called *Ghana Newz Update 24/7*, created last week)

- 1 Reverse image search:** open Chrome and go to **images.google.com**. Click the camera icon (*Search by image*), then upload **viral-flood.jpg** from the desktop. Look at where else the picture appears and how old those pages are.
- 2 Anyone else?** In a new tab, search for *Accra schools closed* and click **News**. Is any trusted news website or the Ministry of Education saying this?
- 3 Find the Report button:** search for *how to report a post on TikTok* (or Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp). Open the platform's **own** help page and write the steps.

W.A.I.T.	What I found
Who	-----
Anyone else	-----
Image	-----
Time	-----
My decision	-----
How to report a post	-----

1. Scenario Decisions: Wise or Unwise?

Social Media Scenario	Wise 	Unwise 
A post says "Drinking hot water with lime cures malaria! Share to save lives!" Kwesi forwards it to his family group straight away.	☐	☐
Someone posts cruel comments about Fatima every day. She doesn't reply, takes screenshots, blocks them and tells her teacher.	☐	☐
Naa sees a classmate being mocked in a group chat. She laughs along with an emoji so she won't be next.	☐	☐
Before sharing a shocking photo, Kojo does a reverse image search and finds it is from 2015.	☐	☐
Abena, aged 11, enters a fake birth year so she can open her own TikTok account.	☐	☐

2. Written Review Questions

Question 1: How does a social media feed decide what to show you? Use the words *signals* and *predict*.

Question 2: What do the letters of W.A.I.T. stand for, and why does fake news spread so fast?

3. Self-Assessment & Mentor Sign-Off

Tick the column that reflects your confidence at the end of Session 34:

Social Media Competency	With Help	Almost Alone	All By Myself!
1. I can explain how a feed learns what to show me, and what an echo chamber is.	☐	☐	☐
2. I can check a viral post with W.A.I.T., including a reverse image search.	☐	☐	☐
3. I know the five steps for cyberbullying and how to be an upstander.	☐	☐	☐
4. I can explain privacy settings, age limits and healthy habits.	☐	☐	☐

Mentor Signature: _____

Date Completed: _____