

Learning activity

Bias in news reporting

Learning outcomes

Must:

All students will be able to identify examples of biased reporting.

Should:

Most students should understand why a news report might be biased.

Could:

Some students can understand what might happen if people only read biased news reporting.

Resource checklist

- ✓ Bias in news reporting slides
- ✓ Report 1: bias in news reporting printable
- ✓ Report 2: bias in news reporting printable
- ✓ Report 3: bias in news reporting printable
- ✓ Report template worksheet

Useful knowledge for supporting teacher/adult

- Some news reports might be slanted to make one side of the story seem more important. This is known as ‘bias’.
- A news report might be biased because it doesn’t include different viewpoints (see activity on balanced news reporting) or because it influences the reader through the language used.
- Always look for bias in the news so that you can work out whether a news report is trying to influence you. Once you’ve done that, you have the power to decide whether you agree with this message or not.
- Reading, watching and listening to lots of different news reports from different sources, even those you disagree with, can help you to understand the full story.

Outline

These activities are intended as a framework you can adapt to suit individual students’ needs. They can be used as standalone activities or as part of a sequence of work on news literacy.

- **20 min main activity** - Activity 1
- **40 min extend activity** - Activity 1 and 2

Activity 1

Use **Bias in news reporting** slides, **Reports 1 and 2: Bias in news reporting** printables

Slide 2: Students read the football match report and decide who wrote it, focusing on whether it is biased towards one team or the other. Highlight the keywords which indicate that the writer favours one team over another. *How can you tell who wrote the report? Whose side are they on? What does the writer want you to feel or think? How do you know? How else might this story have been told?* You may want to print this slide so students can highlight keywords indicating who the writer favours.

Introduce the concept of bias: news reports can make one side of the story seem more important or try to make you believe or do something.

Slide 4: Students read **Report 1**. Find and highlight the words or phrases that describe the teenager and words or phrases that describe the council worker. *What does the writer want you to think?* Draw students' attention to the positive and negative words trying to persuade you to agree with the teenager.

Slide 5: Students read **Report 2**, an example of more neutral reporting. *How are the reports different? Which one is fairer? Why?*

Activity 2

Use **Bias in news reporting** slides, **Report 3** printable and **Report template** worksheet

Extend the learning:

Slides 6-7: Read **Report 3** about the school that banned large backpacks. *What does the writer want you to think?* Highlight the words that show you this. Can students rewrite this story on the report template so it isn't biased and shows different viewpoints? *What words do they need to change? What might be the other viewpoints? (eg school/headteacher who want to keep all students safe.)*

Plenary

Slide 8: *What have you learnt? What is bias in news reporting? Why might a news report be biased? What can we look out for to tell if a report is biased? What might happen if people only read biased news reports?*