



## Health Literacy | A set of cross-cutting learning outcomes

	Students should be able to:		
<b>Learning Outcome</b> 2.10, 3.11 and 4.9	2.10 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information, supports and services about health and wellbeing	3.11 demonstrate how to access and appraise trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health	4.9 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information and services aimed at supporting young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health

### What is health literacy?

Health literacy within SPHE entails building young people's knowledge, competencies and confidence to access, understand, appraise, and use health information, and fostering their ability to apply this knowledge in making decisions about health and wellbeing.

While teenagers are very adept at using technology to source and share information, they are less able to critically evaluate the material they encounter online. A variety of media are feeding young people a constant stream of information and messages which need to be critically appraised to ameliorate their potentially harmful influence, for example, material saturated with images promoting body modification products, fast food, alcohol, sexual violence and quick-fix solutions to physical and mental health problems. Equally, there are some very helpful supports and sources of information.

Health literacy allows young people to step back and question the reliability, relevance and trustworthiness of information they encounter and thus supports them in making healthier choices. Health literacy (including critical digital media literacy) is an important aspect of health promotion and education. For this reason, **health literacy needs to be integrated across all teaching and learning in SPHE.**

### How to foster health literacy within junior cycle SPHE?

- Remind students to ask these questions when searching for information linked to their learning in SPHE:
  1. **Who?** Can you trust the source of the information? Who produced it? What is their level of expertise in the field? Are they medical or health professionals? Why have they produced it – have they a commercial motive? Who owns or funds the initiative? Remember that social influencers are not experts and often get paid for promoting products or services!
  2. **What?** Can you trust the information? Is it accurate and reputable? How can you check? Does it provide reliable sources of evidence for the information, or the claims being made? Are there experts supporting the ideas/claims? How do you know they are actually experts? Is the author stating facts or opinions? Where a product or solution is suggested, does it seem too good to be true?
  3. **When?** When was the information published? Is it up-to-date and still relevant?
- When they are accessing health information, recommend to students that they compare and contrast information from more than one source using critical media literacy questions (see above).
- Alert students to the fact that when they use a search engine to find online information the top results that appear are generally sponsored. Students may need to scroll past the sponsored search results to find independent and reputable sites further down the list.
- Remind students to always question the source of the information and consider if it is being provided by a commercial company or interest group. Such sites may still provide useful information, although it is worth remembering that they may be trying to influence our thinking or behaviour in a particular way.
- Facilitate students to learn how and where they can access the support of a health professional or other trusted adult if they have a serious health worry, rather than relying solely on online support.

**Alert students that the intended audience for most health and relationships websites is over 16s and this needs to be kept in mind when searching for relevant and suitable information.**