

### Navigating the news: an interactive workshop for KS2/KS3

The materials in this pack have been developed and designed by the First News editorial and education teams, to support you in delivering a set of activities for students in KS2 and/or KS3 that will help them:

- understand how a newspaper is put together, and why certain stories are chosen over others
- analyse the features of a news story, including headers, sub-headers and captions
- distinguish between facts and opinions when reading a news article
- check the source of a news story, and decide whether it is credible or not
- write their own, accurate and impartial recounts of events

The activities can be planned over a single, off-timetable day or worked into longer-term planning as a series of discrete lessons.

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## ACTIVITIES INCLUDED

1. What is news? (Points for discussion; plus news sharing worksheet)
2. What is reliable news? (Reliability scale – ordering activity)
3. Your facts, my opinions (comprehension and discussion activity)
4. Newspaper language and newspaper bingo (3 x sorting and retrieval activities)
5. Who, What, When, Where, Why (and How)? (retrieval and composition activities)
6. Fact or fake? (research activity)
7. Choose the news (group discussion and decision-making activity)

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## WHY RUN THIS WORKSHOP?

A newspaper is a unique type of non-fiction text that exposes children to a wide range of topics, opinions, issues and types of information. Reading a newspaper takes children on a journey around the world within its pages, increasing their understanding of different places, people and ways of life. Along the way, they will encounter stories from all areas of the curriculum, such as science, geography and technology, and build their understanding of these topics with knowledge of the latest developments.

Children really enjoy the element of choice involved in reading news, meaning it is read for pleasure as well as for information, and they particularly love to be informed about the world around them – to be ‘in the know’. The reading effort required in order to discover the news and become informed citizens can be relatively low due to its concise style of writing; even so-called ‘reluctant readers’, including those with significant barriers to reading, can access major news from just a few paragraphs.

As well as helping children to become more informed individuals, the very nature of news inevitably leads to discussion. News is full of topical dilemmas over the decisions that shape our society, and balanced news reports provide many opportunities for debate. As these opportunities arise, it's important to point out to pupils that, unlike other countries (for example, Russia, China and Iran), the UK has a free press and one of its primary tasks as our ‘fourth estate’ is to hold those in power to account. Our news doesn't speak for the government, it questions the government. Children can miss this important distinction.



You may well have noticed that recent world events such as the Covid pandemic, the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, and the cost-of-living crisis have meant that primary-aged children have begun discussing news in the playground. This, along with the rise of social media and its ability to rapidly spread misinformation, means there is a need to introduce news into the curriculum at a much earlier age. Primary pupils need to understand how news is put together, the difference between reliable and unreliable sources and to build up critical media literacy skills to support them before they have unguided access to social media. The need not just to consume and accept but to question and analyse the information we come across has never been more important.

Bringing news conversations into the classroom supports children to think through controversial topics and understand different points of view, and provides a chance to discuss any misunderstandings or worries they might have. Helping children to develop informed opinions in this way ultimately gives them a voice in society and enables them to become active citizens, if they so choose.

## SECTION A: WHAT IS NEWS?

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To understand what news is
- To become confident in choosing, discussing and sharing the news

### What is news?

Explain that 'news' shares what is going on in our community. It informs us about the most important events happening around us, from the local to the international. You may want to introduce this topic with pupils by having a discussion around the following question:

Show **PPT slide 2**. Which of the following pieces of information do the children consider to be 'news'?

	Discussion points
An announcement from the prime minister	
The results of the latest Liverpool v Man City football match	
The number of people who attended the village fete last Saturday	This might be in a local paper, but it isn't national news
There has been a massive flood in Pakistan	
The winner of a TV show about baking	This might be reported as 'entertainment news'
My auntie is having a baby	This is news for you, but not for most others
The First World War ended on 11th November, 1918	This is history
Apparently, Taylor Swift's boyfriend is going to propose to her next year	This is gossip
NASA has launched a new rocket	
Labour won by a landslide in the July 2024 general election	Although this was news quite recently, the information is already too old to be 'news'



## Why do we share news?

Ask the children if they can come up with any reasons why people might want to share news. Share **PPT slide 3**. Did the children come up with any of these reasons?

- Being up to date with the latest news is useful and empowering
- It's good to be someone who is 'in the know', and can tell news to others
- We may want to talk about how the news makes us think or feel
- We might find a story difficult to understand, or upsetting, and be looking for help with that
- We might want to share our opinions, and hear those of others

This next activity encourages children to share news in a meaningful way and to become more confident discussing news and their opinions. Hand out copies of First News, and **Worksheet A1**. Give the children time to look through the newspaper, select a story, and fill out the first table on the worksheet.

Next, divide the children into pairs, and ask each pair to share their story selection with each other, explaining why they chose it. They should then fill out the second table on the worksheet, with their partner's information.

## What is reliable news?

Explain that we can now get our news from so many different places – newspapers, TV, radio or online – but, wherever we get it, it's important to make sure our news is reliable and trustworthy.

Reliable news will be written by journalists who are trained to provide balanced news based on accurate information. Journalists working for trustworthy news organisations will double-check all facts to make sure the information they are reporting is correct. If they make an error, the newspaper will publish an apology and correct the report.

British TV broadcasters and newspapers also have legal requirements and codes of conduct that they must comply with. Point out that newspapers can be taken to court if they print misleading information about an individual or organisation.

Share this 'reliable news source' checklist, shown on **PPT slide 4**, with the class:

- ☐ Facts that can be checked – Does the news give you factually correct information that can be checked in another place?
- ☐ Independent – Does it give you a balanced view, or is it opinionated or biased?
- ☐ Named – Is it clear who created the news and will the organisation correct mistakes?
- ☐ Responsible – Does the news come from a place that complies with a code of conduct or legal requirements?

Hand out copies of **Worksheet A2** and ask the children to complete the task, drawing lines from each possible news source to the most appropriate point on the scale of reliability. Can they think of any other news sources to add (e.g. parents, friends, the head teacher)?

Finish the session by explaining that, as well as informing us about what is going on in the world, the news shapes our opinions. It helps us decide what is important, whom to vote for, how to spend our money and what we want to change in our society. It's important to make sure our opinions are informed with facts we can trust. Show **PPT slide 5**. Before we get into a discussion, or voice an opinion, we need to check:

- Do I have all the facts?
- Can I trust my sources of information?
- Have I considered both sides of the argument?

## Your facts, my opinions

Divide the children into small groups, and hand out copies of **Worksheets A3** and **A4** – so half the groups have one, and half the other. Explain that they should read the news story on the sheet, then write down their ideas in the boxes. Once the sheets are completed, pair up each A3 group with an A4 group, and encourage them to discuss and debate their opinions.

## SECTION B: DECODING THE NEWS

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To know and use the common terms associated with the news
- To know that newspapers are organised into useful sections

## Knowing news names

The following three activities aim to familiarise children with the specialist terminology associated with the creation and presentation of printed news. Knowing these names will enable children to discuss the news with confidence. Display materials are included with this pack that can be put up in the classroom for children to refer to.

These activities have been designed as puzzles – a traditional, much-loved feature of newspapers!

**Worksheet B1:** News vocabulary match-up – children should match the word to the correct definition

**Worksheet B2:** News names crossword

**Worksheet B3:** Newspaper bingo (children will need a copy of *First News*)

## Spotting sections

Explain to the children that reading a newspaper is different from reading a book. You don't have to read it all, and you can pick and choose what you want to read.

Explain that newspapers are organised into sections, which helps readers to navigate and find the articles that interest them. Although each newspaper will have its own choice of sections, it's interesting to discuss with pupils the organisational traditions that most newspapers follow. The biggest stories of the week

are selected to go at the front, usually followed by national and then international news. There may be specialist pages next, but entertainment news tends to go towards the back. Sport news is traditionally last, with its biggest stories featured on the back page.

In this next activity, pupils take on the role of the editorial team and decide where in the newspaper they would place a selection of news stories.

It's important to point out that there is no right answer, often the position is decided by whether there is space on a page and what other stories are in the news that week. Some stories that could fit in other sections will be pulled out to go in the Headlines section because they are deemed to be important stories of the week.

Hand out copies of **Worksheets B4, B4** and **B6**. Children should read the stories, then decide which section of the newspaper they would put them in. Working in pairs or small groups should inspire useful discussions!

## SECTION C: DEVELOPING DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEWS

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To use scanning skills to navigate and select news stories
- To understand the function of the lead paragraph
- To use the structure of news reports to aid comprehension

### Scan and select

Explain to the children that the first paragraph or sentence of a news story, often presented in bold text, is called the lead paragraph. The lead will usually summarise the story by answering some of the key questions: Who, What, Where, Why, When and How. For example (show **PPT slide 6**):

**ENVIRONMENTAL** charity Friends of the Earth has called on UK authorities to make bus travel free, in order to combat air pollution and climate change.

**SAINSBURY'S** will not be selling fireworks this year, to help protect pets and tackle anti-social behaviour.

This paragraph helps readers to decide whether they want to stop and read the whole article. In fact, it's often possible to get a good idea of the news just by reading all the lead paragraphs. Explicitly teaching what the lead paragraphs are doing on the page will motivate children to choose the stories that matter to them.



Explain that, as we flick through a newspaper, our eyes will **scan** the page and take in key information that helps us decide whether we want to keep reading, or move on. Here's how it works:

1. First we read the **headlines**
2. We also scan the **pictures**
3. If those are interesting, we will read the **lead paragraph**, to decide whether we want to stop and read the whole article

Hand out copies of **Worksheet C1**, and challenge the children to use their scanning skills!

## Finding information

Explain to the children that most news reports are written in and structured in a similar way. **Share PPT slide 7**, and talk through the labelled elements. **Share PPT slide 8**, which focuses on lead paragraphs, and talk about how densely packed with information each example is. Then share **PPT slide 9**, and encourage the children to find the information as requested.

Finally, hand out **Worksheet C2**. This is quite a challenging comprehension exercise, so you may wish to complete it as a class, with you modelling how to find the answers.

## SECTION D: ANALYSING THE NEWS

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- To recognise the different text types found in a newspaper and to understand the purpose of each
- To be able to distinguish between facts and opinions in different articles
- To understand that journalists put the news together and make choices about what is in the news

## Fact or opinion?

Explain that there are several different types of articles that can be found in newspapers. Make sure all the children have access to a copy of *First News*, then hand out **Worksheet D1**, and ask them to complete it, finding an example of each of the five types of article described.

Share **PPT slide 10** and ask the children to decide whether they are reading facts or opinion. In this case, the paragraph contains both, as is explained when you click through the slide. **PPT slides 11** and **12** show more examples for the children to analyse, independently or in groups/as a class.

## News choices

Explain that really, there is no such thing as ‘the’ news – people, often called editors, choose what news we are shown. Different newspapers or TV channels will judge different stories to be important to their readers or viewers according to their own agenda, and provide different news.

Share **PPT slide 13**, and talk through how the *First News* editorial team decides what news stories should appear in the week’s newspaper, and in which section they should appear.

Share **PPT slide 14**. Explain that a newspaper starts out as a flatplan – pages laid out with a grid of empty spaces – that the editorial team uses to plan and order the news stories.

Now tell the children that it’s their turn to be the editorial team! Divide them into groups, and give each group a copy of **Worksheet D2** (flatplan grids) and **Worksheet D3** (ten articles).

Ask the children to cut out the articles (or you could cut them out in advance), then, in groups, sort them into the ones they think are most and least important.

Each editorial team must decide which four stories they want to print in the newspaper, one to be featured on the front cover and three in headline news.

The team will need to discuss and debate until they reach agreement, thinking about the importance of each story and whether it’s of interest to *First News* readers.

Can they come up with strong headlines for each of their selected stories?

## As a plenary:

- Ask each group to feed back which news stories they have chosen and what their newspaper looks like.
- Ask them to justify their choices and challenge them about why they left out other stories.
- Discuss the fact that each team’s paper may be different. What does that tell us? It’s all to do with the people!