

Use of digital media and mental health

Teacher's guide



Secondary Education

CONTENTS

1. Introduction and general objectives	3
2. Recommendations for teachers: What this workshop is and is not	4
3. Day 1 – Digital media and wellbeing	
• Activity 1. Analysing our digital wellbeing	5
4. Day 2 – Healthy use of digital media	
• Activity 1. Usage times for digital media	8
5. Day 3 – Reflection and healthy habits	
• Activity 1. – Reflection and healthy media habits	11
6. Supplementary activities	
• Complementary Activity 1 — Debate on Fake News and social media	14
• Complementary Activity 2 — My weekly digital disconnect plan	15
7. Printable materials and resources	
• Checklist of materials per session	16
◦ Day 1	
▫ Activity 1.1 — “A day with Felix and Sam” + dice.	17
◦ Day 2	
▫ Activity 2.1 — Statement cards	20
◦ Supplementary activities	
▫ Activity 1 — Misleading posts	21
▫ Activity 2 — Weekly plan template	29

INTRODUCTION

The **use of digital media** plays a central role in the lives of **adolescents**. **Smartphones, social media, streaming platforms, video games, and messaging apps** influence their daily way of communicating, learning, and relating to the world. At these ages, screen time increases significantly and, with it, so do the opportunities and associated risks.

This module seeks to offer a space for **critical and conscious reflection** on media habits in Year 7 and Year 8 students. Through **participatory dynamics, debates, and practical activities**, adolescents are invited to analyse the **impact of digital media on their physical, emotional, and social wellbeing**, as well as to develop strategies that encourage **balanced and responsible use**.

The **role of the teacher** is key to accompanying, guiding, and facilitating an **open dialogue** that allows students to **recognise their digital consumption patterns**, question normalised practices, and design **healthier alternatives**. Beyond identifying problems, this workshop aims to **empower students** to set **realistic personal goals** that improve their **quality of life** and strengthen their **self-regulation skills** in the digital age.

Summary:

- **Digital media are central to adolescents' lives:** mobiles, social media, streaming, video games, messaging.
- At this age, **screen time increases greatly**, bringing opportunities but also **risks**.

Purpose of the module:

- Create a space for **reflection and awareness regarding digital habits**.
- Use **debates, dynamics, and activities** to analyse how **media influence wellbeing** (physical, emotional, and social).
- Motivate students to design **balanced and responsible digital use strategies**.

Key points for teachers:

- **Guide and accompany the conversation** in an open and safe atmosphere.
- Help students **recognise their patterns** and question **unhealthy habits**.
- Encourage them to set **realistic personal goals** that improve their day-to-day life and **strengthen self-regulation**.



The ideas we share in this workshop are simply suggestions on how the material can be used. Feel free to adapt it to your needs: you can divide the workshop into two parts, distribute it over several days, or complete it in a single session, whichever is most convenient for you. You know your students and know what suits them best.

Likewise, materials can be used in both printed and digital formats, depending on what is most convenient for you.

Keywords

- Digital media
 - Social media
 - Online emotions
 - Digital self-esteem
 - Social comparison
 - Digital identity
 - Healthy boundaries
 - Cyberbullying
 - Mindfulness
- Digital media
 - Social media
 - Online emotions
 - Digital self-esteem
 - Social comparison
 - Digital identity
 - Healthy boundaries
 - Cyberbullying
 - External validation

Expected results module 8

By the end of this module, it is expected that students will develop a **more conscious and critical outlook on the emotional impact of digital media**, as well as **tools to engage with them** from a position of greater **balance, respect, and self-care**.

D1

Day 1. Digital media and wellbeing (50 minutes duration)

Activity 1: We analyse our digital wellbeing (40 - 45 minutes duration)
Adapt it to the rhythm and level of participation of the group.

1.1.1 Objectives

1. Reflect on one's own use of digital media.
2. Recognise the possible effects of media use on physical, emotional, and social wellbeing.
3. Identify emotions and habits associated with screen time.
4. Promote critical thinking and dialogue regarding balanced digital lifestyles.

Materials

- ☐ Printed or projected text: "A day with Felix and Sam".
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers / chalk.
- ☐ Worksheets or sheets for noting down impressions.
- ☐ Emotion and media dice (optional, for the second part).
- ☐ Chairs arranged in a circle or in groups of 4-5 students.

1.1.2 Activity procedure:

Part 1

1. Introduction: *"How does it feel to use media?"*
2. Guiding questions:
 - *"How do you think mobile use or social media affects how you feel each day?"*
 - *"What emotions do you associate with using screens for a long time?"*
 - *"Do you believe your use of media helps you feel good or sometimes exhausts you?"*
3. Write the answers on the whiteboard (for example: fun, anxiety, relaxation, distraction, stress).
4. Explain that today they will analyse two different examples of how media use can affect wellbeing.

Part 2

1. Read aloud or distribute the following text:

A day with Felix and Sam

Sam woke up on Monday morning and immediately grabbed his mobile to watch videos. **Felix**, on the other hand, got dressed quickly and went out to practise some tricks with the ball. After a quick breakfast, **Sam** watched more videos and played a game on his mobile. At school, his phone was always to hand: just to check messages or look at funny photos. In the afternoon, he sat on the sofa, watched a series, and later played a video game on the computer.

By night, he hung out with his mobile again until he went to sleep.

Felix had breakfast and went to school. There he participated in class and played tag during break. Afterwards, he met up with his friends to play football.

At home he read a comic and played a bit on the console.

After dinner, he drew before going to sleep.

2. Comprehension and reflection questions:

- What differences do you notice between Felix's day and Sam's day?
- How do you think each one feels at the end of the day?
- Which activities help wellbeing more?
- With which of the two do you identify more and why?

3. Note down the main ideas on the whiteboard.

Part 3

1. Introduce the "Emotion dice game".

2. Explain the rules::

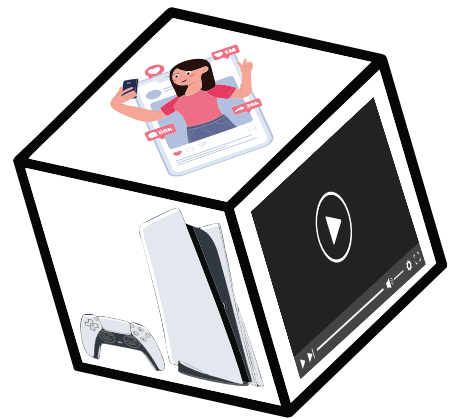
- One die **indicates the type of media** (e.g., social media, video games, videos, music, messaging).
- Another **die shows emotions** (joy, boredom, stress, calm, curiosity, frustration).

3. In turns, students roll both dice and share a real experience.

- Example:
 - "Social media + frustration" = *"When I see comparisons with other people."*
 - "Music + calm" = *"When I listen to songs before going to sleep."*

4. Questions to go deeper:

- *What media make you feel good?*
- *What media generate more tiredness or stress for you?*
- *What could you do to find a balance?*



Part 4

1. Bring the whole class together and ask some students to share what they have discovered about their habits and emotions.

2. On the whiteboard, draw two columns:
 - Note down the ideas as they emerge.

"It makes me feel good"	"It tires me or stresses me"

3. Close the activity by highlighting the key idea:
 - *"Digital media are part of our life, but we decide how to use them. If we learn to balance them, they can make us feel good."*

Note for the teacher

- **Avoid value judgements:** focus the conversation on wellbeing and self-reflection, not on prohibition.
- **If the group is very participatory, you can divide it in two:** one analyses Sam's story and the other Felix's.
- **You can keep the poster of "habits that make me feel good" in the classroom** to return to it in future sessions.

D2

Day 2. Healthy use of digital media (50 minutes total duration)

Activity 1: Digital media usage times (45-50 minutes duration)

Adapt it to the rhythm and participation of your group.

2.1.1 Objectives

1. Students understand the **importance of screen time and breaks**.
2. Understand the **importance of screen time and breaks**. (Nota: Se mantiene la repetición del original).
3. Analyse the **positive and negative effects of using digital media**.
4. Identify **risks and benefits** in different areas of daily life (**sleep, friendships, concentration, wellbeing**).
5. Formulate **concrete strategies for a more balanced and conscious use** of technology.

Materials

- ☐ Whiteboard and markers.
- ☐ Cards or projector with statements about the use of digital media.
- ☐ Sheets or cardstock for group work.
- ☐ Material for creating posters with the results (markers, adhesive tape).

2.1.2 Activity procedure:

Part 1

1. Introduction: "What do we think about digital media?"
 - Present different **statements about the use of digital media**.
 - After each one, students express whether they agree, partially agree, or disagree.
 - **Formas de votar**

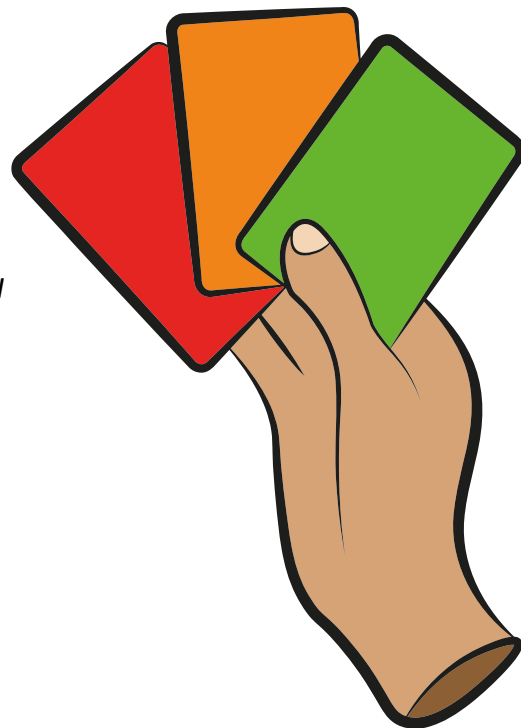
Green: Agree
Amber: Partially agree
Red: Disagree

Negative effects

- *"I feel bad when I compare myself with other people on social media."*
- *"If I spend a long time on my mobile, my head hurts."*
- *"Sometimes I don't have time for my hobbies because I use my mobile too much."*
- *"I feel like I less often want to meet my friends in person."*
- *"I feel like I have to be available all the time."*

Positive effects

- *"Media help me to learn new things."*
- *"I feel good when I watch a funny video."*
- *"I can express myself creatively through media, for example, with photos or videos."*
- *"I can talk to my friends, even if they are far away."*
- *"Media help me to stay informed about topics that interest me."*



Neutral or reflection-inducing statements:

- "Sometimes I *spend more time with screens than I actually want to.*"
- "I find it *hard to stop playing* once I start on my mobile."
- "Media are good, but *sometimes I need a break.*"
- "I realise that *media influence my mood*, sometimes for the better, other times for the worse."
- "When I receive a notification, I *want to read it immediately*, even if I am doing something else."

2. After voting: ask

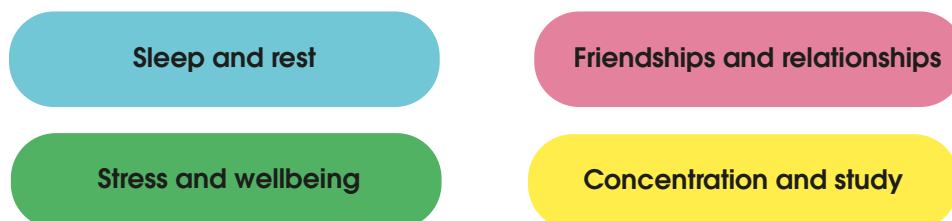
- "Which phrases generated the most agreement?"
- "Which ones caused the most debate?"
- "Why?"

3. Note down the most important ideas on the whiteboard.

Part 2

1. Group analysis: "How do media affect us?"

2. Divide the class into **small groups (4-5 students)**. Each group receives a **different topic**:



3. Each group **reflects and notes down their answers** on a sheet or poster:

- *How can media help us in this aspect?*
- *How can they harm us?*
 - E.g. Sleep topic:
 - **Help:** listening to relaxing music before bed.
 - **Harm:** looking at the mobile until late or receiving notifications at midnight.
 - Go around the groups, **guide the conversations**, and encourage everyone to participate.

Part 3 - Feedback and reflection

1. Each group briefly presents its conclusions.
2. Compile the results on the whiteboard, highlighting:

Positive effects

Negative effects

Ideas for healthier use

3. Questions to reflect on together:
 - *"What did we discover about our own habits?"*
 - *"Where do we see possible problems or improvements?"*
 - *"What could we do differently from now on?"*

Part 4 - Closing: "Tips for healthy use"

1. Together, the class creates a list of practical tips to improve digital wellbeing.
 - They can note them on the **whiteboard**, **on a poster**, or in a **digital document**.
 - Examples of tips:
 - Take **breaks every hour** when using screens.
 - **Turn off notifications** during study.
 - **Avoid screens** at least 30 minutes before bed.
 - **Reserve moments of the day** without technology.
 - **Speak in person** more often with friends and family.
2. The teacher thanks them for their participation and closes with a **final reflection**:
 - *"Digital media have very good things, but they can also affect us if we use them without control. The important thing is learning to balance them so that they make us feel good."*

Note for the teacher

- You can **adapt the statements** to the context and age of the group.
- If you see fit, **keep the posters** with the created tips and hang them in the classroom.
- **Repeat the dynamic throughout the year** to review how the group's media habits evolve.

D3 Day 3. Reflection and healthy habits (45 -50 minutes duration)

Activity 1: Reflection and healthy media habits

Adapt it to the rhythm and level of participation of the group.

1.1.1 Objectives

1. Reflect on one's own media habits and their effects on wellbeing.
2. Develop personal strategies to establish healthy breaks.
3. Formulate personal rules and goals for a more responsible and balanced use of digital media.

Materials

- ☐ White or coloured sheets for drawing or writing.
- ☐ Markers, pencils, or paints.
- ☐ Old magazines (optional, if you wish to create a collage).
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers.
- ☐ Large cardstock to create the joint class list.

1.1.2 Activity procedure:

Part 1 Introduction: "This is how I relate to media"

1. Ask the students to **draw a symbol or small sketch that represents how they feel** regarding their use of digital media
 - Examples:
 - A mobile with a cloud: feeling of confusion or saturation.
 - A sun: positive experience.
 - A clock: lack of free time.
 - A tree: balance or disconnection.
2. Once the drawing is finished, form **small groups (3-4 students)**.
 - Each group **shares their drawings** and comments on **what common feelings appear** (stress, fun, tiredness, calm...).
3. Afterwards, each group shares a general conclusion with the rest of the class.
 - **Objective: Identify emotions associated with media use** and connect with personal experiences.



Part 2 Preparation: "Media-free zones and times"

1. Explain that they will now reflect on **when and where** it is **advisable to disconnect**. Introduction:
 - *"Sometimes, digital media accompany us all day. But we also need moments without screens: to rest, concentrate, or enjoy the present."*
 - Comment on examples:
 - No mobile during meals.
 - Not looking at screens before sleep.
 - Walks or outdoor activities without technology.
2. Then, **divide the class into small groups** and distribute materials (sheets, cardstock, or magazines for collage).
3. Group task:
 - Think of **places and times** of the day when it would be good to have a digital break.
 - **Represent their ideas on a poster or collage.**

- Examples:
 - *"During meals"*
 - *"Before sleep"*
 - *"While studying"*
 - *"With family or friends"*



Part 3 Presentation and joint list

1. Each group presents their poster or collage.
2. After the presentations, the **teacher compiles the ideas** and, together, they create a **joint class list** titled: **"Zones and moments free from screens"**.
3. This list can be **displayed in the classroom** to remember it throughout the course.

Part 4 “My media goal”

1. Each student formulates a personal goal to improve their digital wellbeing.
2. Instructions:
 - They can **write it down or draw it**.
 - It must be a **clear, realistic, and positive goal**.
 - Examples:
 - *“Not using my mobile before going to sleep.”*
 - *“Having a screen-free day at the weekend.”*
 - *“Listening to relaxing music instead of looking at social media.”*
3. When everyone has finished, **conduct a plenary reflection**:
 - Some students can **share their goals voluntarily**.
 - The rest of the group can **offer ideas or tips to achieve them**.

Part 5 Optional task: “I talk about my goal at home”

1. Ask the students to **share their personal goal with their parents or guardians**. They can discuss together **how to support each other to achieve it** (for example, by establishing common screen-free schedules).

Note for the teacher

- Value the drawings and collages as tools for **emotional expression**, not artistic ones.
- Reinforce **positive messages about balance and wellbeing**, avoiding guilt.
- You can **review the goals in a later session** and analyse the progress with the group.

AC1

Complementary activities

Activity 1: Debate on Fake News and social media (30 minutes duration)

4.1.1 Objectives

1. **Develop critical thinking** towards digital information.
2. **Identify signs of misinformation** on social media.

Materials

- ☐ Examples of fake/misleading headlines or posts (can be adapted screenshots).
- ☐ Digital projector or whiteboard.
- ☐ Sheets for noting down answers.

4.1.2 Activity procedure:

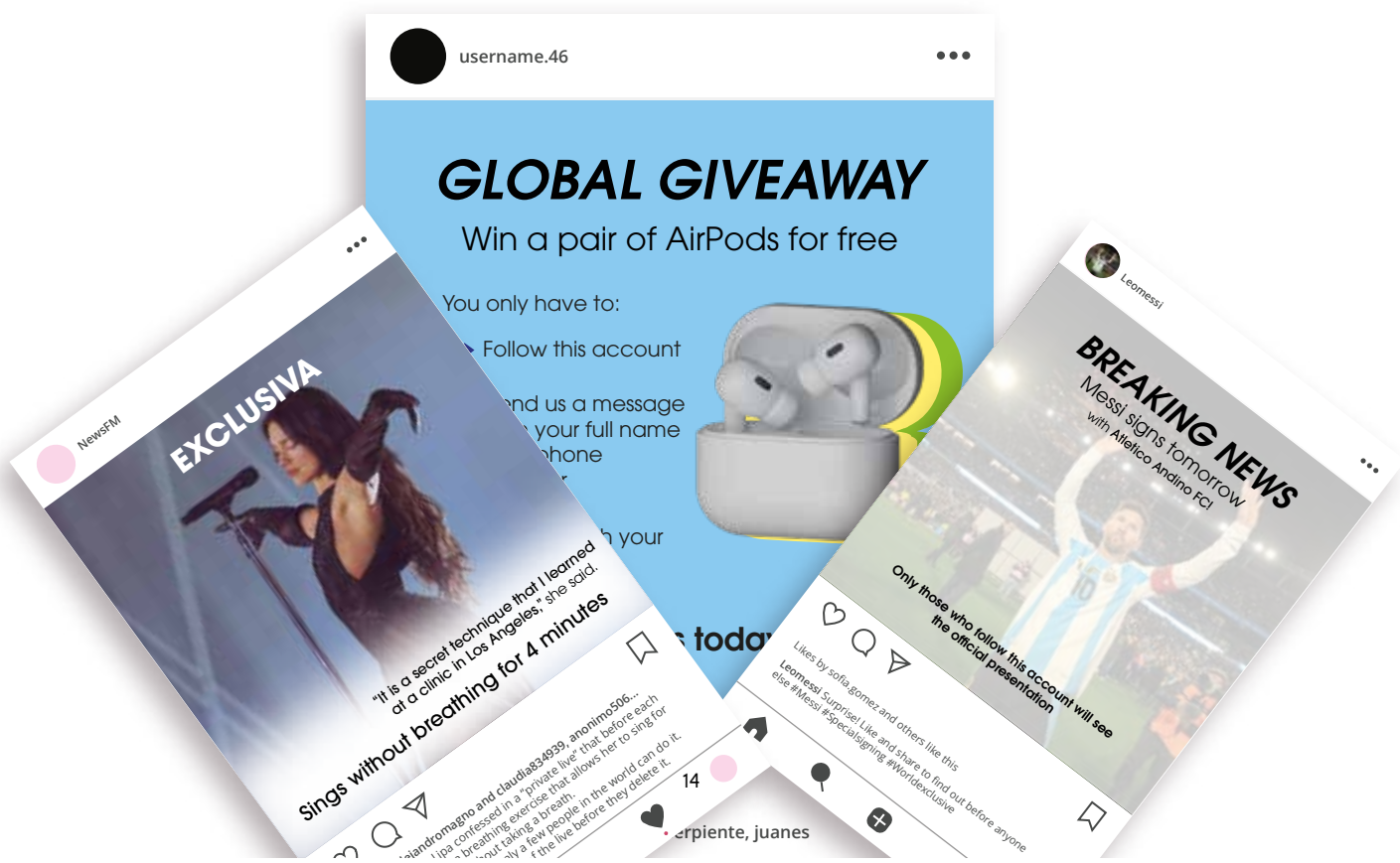
1. The teacher presents 2-3 examples of fake news or misleading posts.
- 2.

In small groups, students discuss:

- "How can I recognise if this information is reliable?"
- "What are the risks of sharing unverified information?"

3. Each group shares its conclusions in a plenary session.
- 4.

The teacher summarises the key points for detecting fake news on the whiteboard.



AC2

Activity 2: My weekly digital disconnect plan (20 - 25 minutes duration)

4.1.1 Objectives

1. **Promote balance** between digital and non-digital activities.
2. **Encourage autonomy** in time management.

Materials

- ☐ Printable: Weekly plan template (with space to note down screen-free activities).
- ☐ Coloured pencils or markers.

4.1.2 Activity procedure:

1. Each student receives a **weekly plan template**.
2. **Complete the spaces with screen-free activities** (e.g. sport, reading, spending time with friends, creative hobbies).
3. **Decorate the plan in a personal way** to stay motivated to follow it.
4. In a **plenary session**, students share some **inspiring ideas from their plan**.
5. The teacher **encourages them to apply the plan at home** for a week and reflect on the results.

Emotional Journal

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
What activity today made you feel happiest?	What emotion did you notice most strongly today and why?	What would you like to improve tomorrow?	What small achievement today made you feel proud?	Which screen-free activity did you enjoy most today and what made it special?	How much time did you spend away from screens and how did you feel?	What did you learn about yourself when you didn't depend on any device?

Material checklist for all activities

Day 1. Digital media and wellbeing

- ☐ Printed or projected text: "A day with Felix and Sam".
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers / chalk.
- ☐ Worksheets or sheets for noting down impressions.
- ☐ Emotion and media dice (optional, for the second part).
- ☐ Chairs arranged in a circle or in groups of 4-5 students.

Day 2. Healthy use of digital media

- ☐ Whiteboard and markers.
- ☐ Cards or projector with statements about the use of digital media.
- ☐ Sheets or cardstock for group work.
- ☐ Material for creating posters with the results (markers, adhesive tape).

Day 3. Reflection and healthy media habits

- ☐ White or coloured sheets for drawing or writing.
- ☐ Markers, pencils, or paints.
- ☐ Old magazines (optional, if creating a collage is desired).
- ☐ Whiteboard and markers.
- ☐ Large cardstock for creating the joint class list.

Complementary activities

4.1 Fake news

- ☐ Examples of fake/misleading headlines or posts (can be adapted screenshots)
- ☐ Digital projector
- ☐ Sheets for noting down answers

4.2 My weekly digital disconnect plan

- ☐ Printable: Weekly plan template
- ☐ Coloured pencils or markers

A day with Felix and Sam

Sam woke up on Monday morning and immediately picked up his mobile to watch videos. Felix, on the other hand, got dressed quickly and went out to practise some football tricks. After a quick breakfast, Sam watched more videos and played a game on his phone. At school, his phone was always at hand: just to check messages or look at funny photos. In the afternoon, he sat on the sofa, watched a series and later played a video game on the computer.

At night, he spent time on his mobile again until he went to sleep.

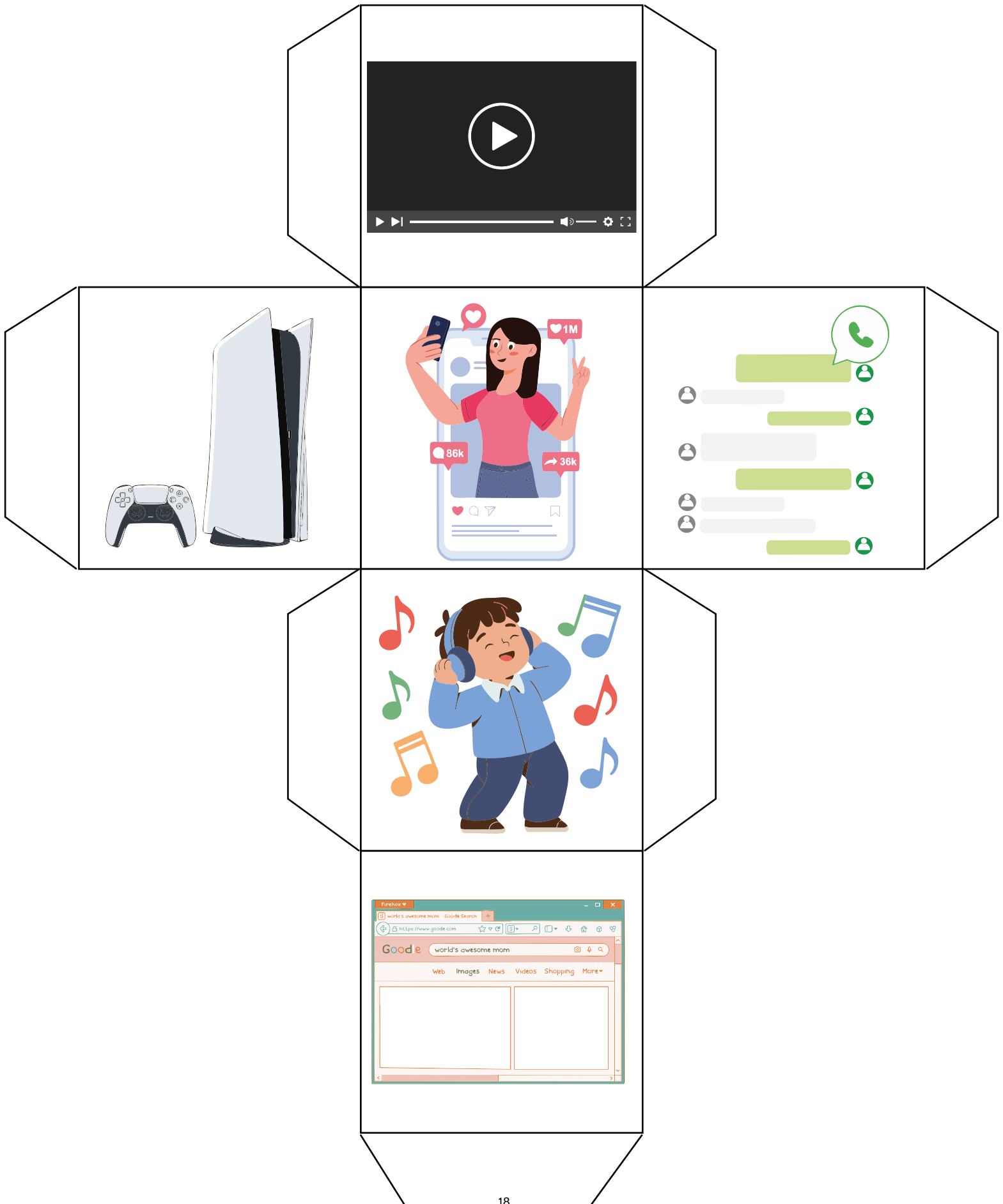
Felix had breakfast and went to school. There, he participated in class and played tag during break.

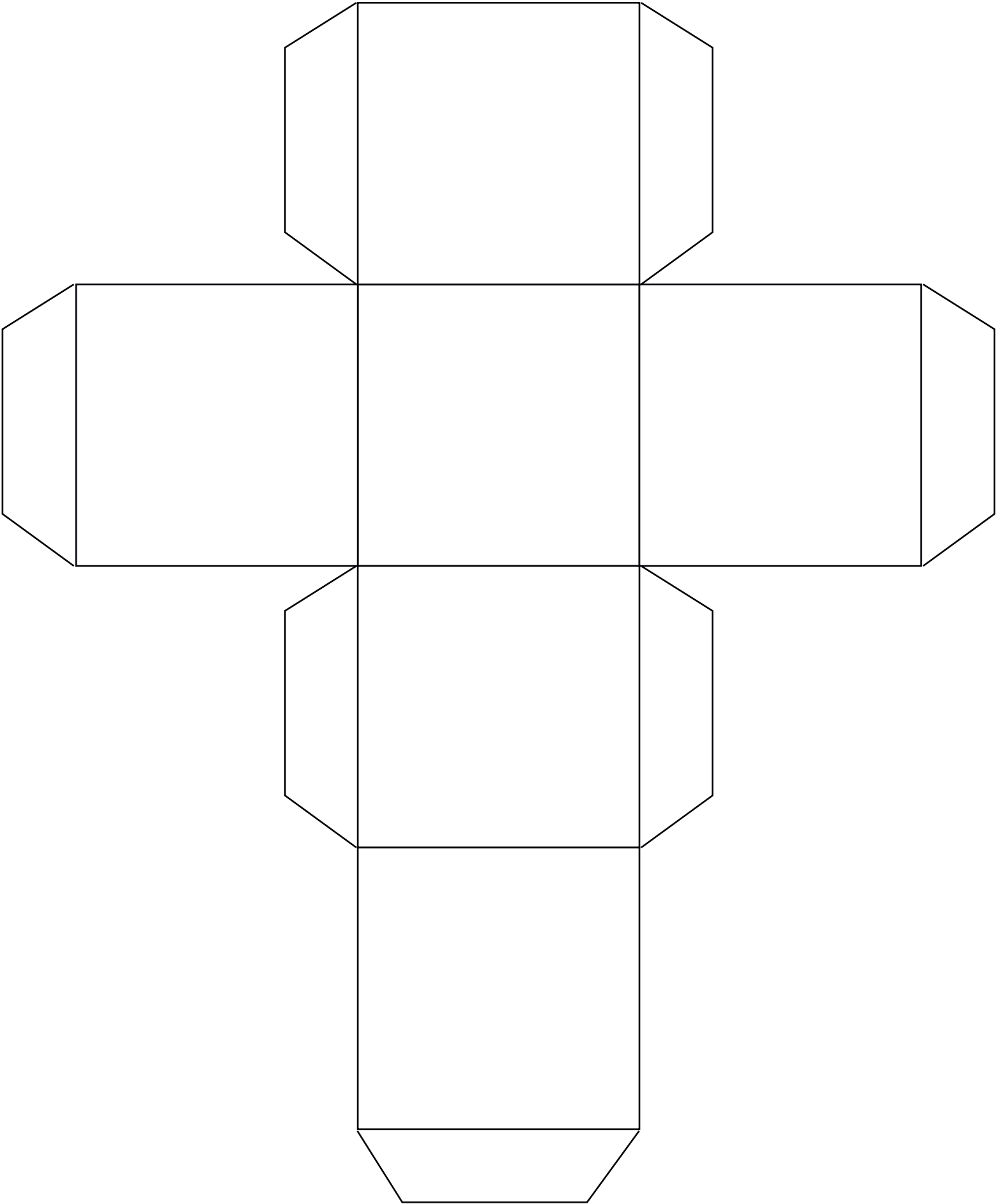
Afterwards, he met up with his friends to play football.

At home, he read a comic and played on his games console for a bit.

After dinner, he drew before going to sleep.

Printable Activity 1: Analysing our digital wellbeing – Dice





I feel bad when I compare myself with other people on social media.

If I spend too long on my mobile, I get a headache.

Sometimes I don't have time for my hobbies because I use my mobile too much.

I feel like I less want to meet up with my friends in person.

I feel like I have to be available all the time.

Media helps me to learn new things.

I can talk to my friends, even if they are far away.

I can express myself creatively through media, for example, with photos or videos.

I feel good when I watch a funny video.

Digital media allow me to find people who share my interests and passions.

Sometimes I spend more time on screens than I actually want to.

I find it hard to stop playing once I start on my mobile.

Media is good, but sometimes I need a break.

I realise that media influences my mood, sometimes for the better, and other times for the worse.

When I receive a notification, I want to read it immediately, even if I am doing something else.



username.46



GLOBAL GIVEAWAY

Win a pair of AirPods for free

You only have to:

- Follow this account
- Send us a message with your full name and phone number
- Share it with your friends



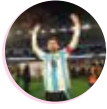
Winners today!



Likes by **geminis37** and **doloresserpiente, juanes**

username.46 Don't miss this opportunity





Leomessi



BREAKING NEWS

Messi signs tomorrow
with Atletico Andino FC!

**Only those who follow this account will see
the official presentation**



Likes by sofia.gomez and others like this

Leomessi Surprise! Like and share to find out before anyone else #Messi #Specialsigning #Worldexclusive





ksi



Likes by [manuellopez](#) and [fernandasolis](#), [juanperez](#), [pepito gomez](#)

ksi lifts 485 kg live!! The video was deleted but we have it.
COMMENT "I want to see it" and we will send it to you.





“It is a secret technique that I learned at a clinic in Los Angeles,” she said.

Sings without breathing for 4 minutes



Likes by [alejandromagno](#) and [claudia834939](#), [anonimo506...](#)

News FM Dua Lipa confessed in a “private live” that before each concert she does a breathing exercise that allows her to sing for almost 4 minutes without taking a breath.

According to her team, only a few people in the world can do it. Like the post to see the clip of the live before they delete it.





centralcee



Central cee challenge

Do you dare to try it?



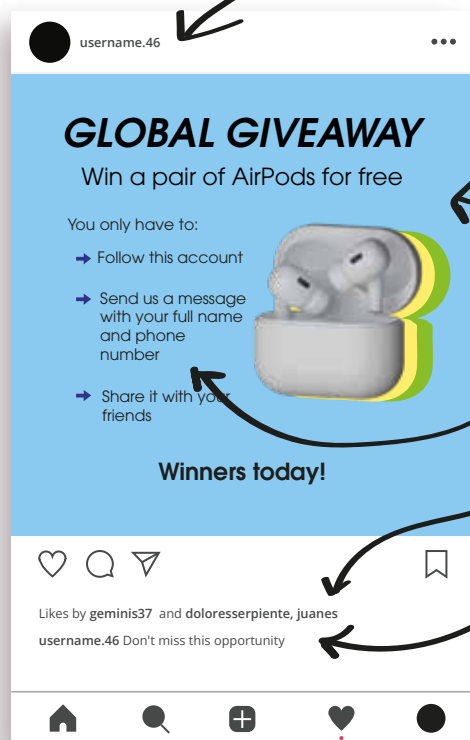
Likes by [jennrifer429.g](#) and [itzelgomez77](#)

centralcee can walk on a row of cans without falling. Could you?

Record yourself walking on top of 10 fizzy drink cans and tag us. The best ones will appear in our stories!!



For teachers



No profile picture.
The account is not verified.

Very generic photos and text.

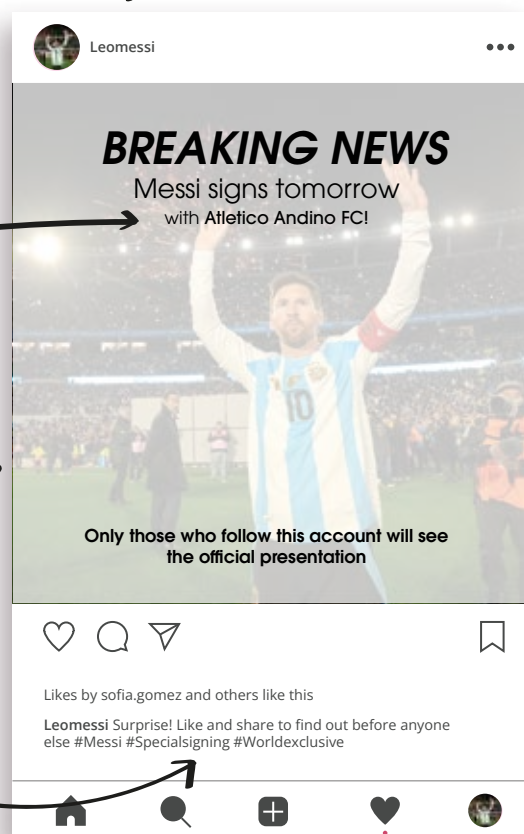
Real giveaways do not ask for private data.

The names of those who "liked" it are not trustworthy.

The description lacks details.
There are no official terms and conditions for the giveaway.

Objective: To identify phishing
and data theft.

The account is not verified.



It cites an invented club; "El Atlético Andino" does not exist.

Very generic photos and text.

It asks for likes and shares to increase reach.

There are no official sources (neither the club's account, nor Messi's, nor sports media).

It uses phrases designed for virality:
"exclusive", "only those who follow this account", "tomorrow", "secret signing".

Objective: To identify fake sports
rumours and work on critical
thinking.



The account is not verified.

The weight being "lifted" is beyond human reality (only possible if you are a professional athlete in that specific field).

Low-quality photo.

A public figure would have many comments.

It promises something that doesn't exist (typical clickbait).

It uses comments as currency (engagement manipulation).

Engagement manipulation refers to the techniques and strategies used to influence the attention and commitment of users on digital platforms.

Objective: To identify exaggerated or physically impossible content and detect engagement bait.

There is no profile picture, nor is the account verified.

Low-quality photo from a film set (completely unrelated to the post).

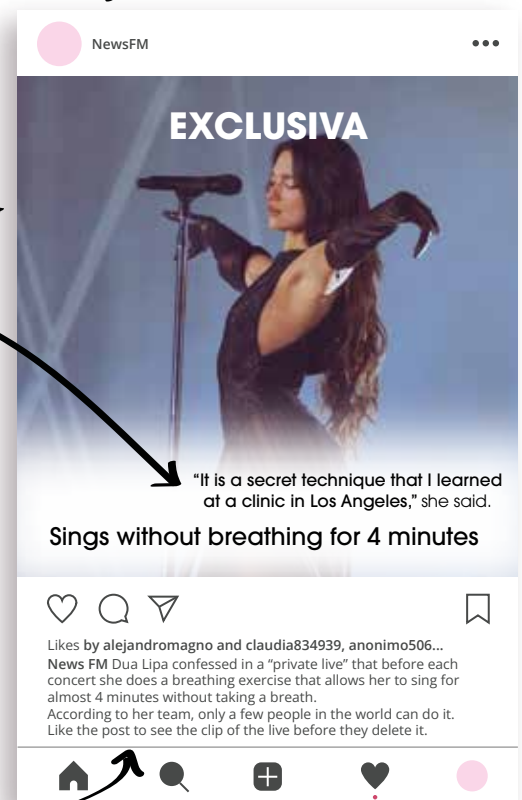
A professional team does not leak "secret" techniques via Instagram.

It is physiologically impossible to sing without breathing for 4 minutes.

It shows no real evidence (date, source, link, screenshot).

It asks for likes in exchange for something (virality bait).

Objective: To detect subtle deceptions, question unsourced information, and understand how scams mix real data with false claims to appear credible.



Objective: To recognise dangerous viral challenges, evaluate risks, identify imitable behaviours that can cause harm, and resist implicit social pressure.



Unverified profile.

Personal profile picture that does not fit the theme.

Low-quality photo.

It attributes a fake challenge to a celebrity.

It encourages recording oneself and being exposed without thinking.
It promotes an unsafe activity.

What activity today made you feel happiest?

What emotion did you notice most strongly today and why?

What would you like to improve tomorrow?

What small achievement today made you feel proud?

Which screen-free activity did you enjoy most today and what made it special?

How much time
did you spend
away from
screens and how
did you feel?

What did you learn about yourself when you didn't depend on any device?

Important notes of the week



Co-funded by
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Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.

