

LWVMI Presentation: Resisting Disinformation  
Updated March 2025  
SCRIPT FOR BRIEF VERSION (10 SLIDES)

**Slide 1**

Welcome!

I'm \_\_\_\_\_ of the League of Women Voters.

Thanks for being here today to learn tips for Resisting Disinformation.

We will go over:

- what dis- and misinformation are
- why people spread disinformation
- how disinformation works
- why it sticks
- when to respond
- and how to respond

**Slide 2**

What is the difference between misinformation and disinformation?

Both have to do with false or misleading information.

You can think of disinformation as coming from the producers—they create and spread false information. Misinformation is when people share that disinformation, not knowing it is false. So it is the difference between producers and sharers.

Why produce false or misleading information? It is important to consider possible purposes, because pointing out the motivation is key to debunking disinformation.

- Some disinformation is designed to help someone retain or gain political power.
- Some disinformation is spread by pranksters who thrive on attention or enjoy chaos.
- Some disinformation generates revenue by gaining likes or shares, or by promoting sales.

Why share disinformation? We may share to affirm our affiliation or identity.

**Slide 3**

False or misleading information comes in many forms.

Here you see 7 types along a continuum of intent to cause harm, running from low at the left to high at the right.

- At the low end, a satirist likely does not mean to cause harm. However, someone who misses the satire may unintentionally cause harm by sharing the satire as genuine.
- The next 3 types--false connection, misleading content and false context—we will talk about in a minute.
- Imposter content is when the creator pretends to be a source they are not.
- Manipulated content brings to mind the slowed down video of Nancy Pelosi that made her seem drunk.
- At the far end of the continuum is wholesale creation of false content.

[Source: First Draft (now defunct) <https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/understanding-information-disorder/> ]

#### **Slide 4**

Here are some of the tactics used to produce the 3 types of disinformation that lay more in the middle of the continuum:

- false connection
- misleading content
- false context

A false connection can be created through a misleading argument or logical fallacy.

- The graphic shows a logical fallacy—just because 2 and 1 are both numbers, does not mean  $2 = 1$ .

False context can be achieved with outdated information or just a lack of context altogether.

Misleading content could be half-truths, biased narratives, conspiracies or appeals to hatred or stereotypes.

#### **Slide 5**

We are most likely to believe disinformation when it fits our existing biases or plays to our fears.

Disinformation usually appeals to emotions. If we are riled up, we are more likely to respond or share online, which is often the goal of those who post such material.

Disinformation provides easy answers to complicated problems. It can be reassuring to find a simple explanation for a complex, nuanced situation. It can be easier to consider something “good” or “bad,” rather than allow it to be ambiguous or unresolved in our mind.

No matter if something is true or false, the more we hear or see it, the more we think it must be true.

## Slide 6

When you encounter disinformation, the default action is NOT to engage.

As we noted at the beginning, engagement can serve the purposes of those purveying the disinformation—giving them power or attention, or earning them profits.

And remember, the more something is repeated, the more it seems true. Even when we repeat something to say that it is false!

There are some situations when you may want to respond to disinformation:

- When communicating online with one other individual or in a small, closed group
- When interacting in person with another individual

In those cases, you will want to draw on the techniques of structured conversations and counter messaging.

## Slide 7

When engaging with an individual or small, closed group, use a structured conversation.

1. First, listen with empathy. This means not thinking about a response, but listening without interruption--to understand the person's feelings and what they have lived through.
2. Then affirm the pertinent values you two (or members of the small group) have in common.
3. Next, briefly describe what may motivate the spread of disinformation—politics, pranks, profit.
4. Share why you feel as you do about the disinformation—be honest and vulnerable about your feelings and values.
5. Then offer a “truth sandwich,” which we'll go into next.
6. Finally, affirm your relationship, even if the two of you still hold widely divergent viewpoints.

## Slide 8

Counter messaging works well when we provide a “Truth Sandwich”—one not filled with facts, but with values.

We start at the top of the sandwich.

1. Make a statement about the general topic and our shared values.

For example: We all want secure and accurate elections.

2. Then, without repeating the disinformation, state who is spreading it about this topic and why.

People seeking political power try to divide us by attacking our election process.

3. For the bottom of the sandwich, state a positive vision for the future with regard to the topic.

The security of our election process makes me optimistic about the future of our democracy.

### **Slide 9**

To learn more, here are key sources for this presentation. They offer guidance and more information.

Special thanks to the Algorithmic Transparency Institute and Progress Michigan.

### **Slide 10**

I hope this presentation has helped you feel more prepared to identify disinformation, to understand why it's good not to share it, and to know when and how to respond.

Thank you for listening!