

Learning objectives

- Identify when online information might be inaccurate or misleading.
- Cross-check digital claims against reliable reference sources.
- Explain why automated assistants can make mistakes.

Starter

Have you ever met someone who sounded completely sure of themselves, but was actually wrong? Sometimes computer programs sound just like a real expert even when they make mistakes. Today, we are going to help Maya and Dev double-check a claim made by Otto, our blank speech bubble character.

Main activity

Otto the chatbot says: "The red squirrel is the only squirrel native to the UK, and it can fly up to twenty metres between trees using its special webbed paws."

Compare this to the reliable reference text: "The red squirrel is indeed native to the UK, unlike the introduced grey squirrel. However, red squirrels cannot fly or glide. They are agile climbers that jump between branches using their strong hind legs and bushy tails for balance."

Pupil questions:

1. What did Otto claim that was actually incorrect?
2. How does the reference text prove Otto was wrong?
3. Why do you think a computer program might write something that is not true?
4. What is one reliable way Dev and Maya can check information they find online?

Plenary

We have seen today that even very clever-sounding technology can get its facts muddled up. Always remember to search for a second, trusted source before you believe what a screen tells you.

Curriculum links

Education for a Connected World (Information Literacy) / Computing KS2

For the teacher — this also covers:

English (reading comprehension and cross-referencing two texts); oracy (spoken reasoning and paired discussion); critical thinking about how reliable a source is.