

Media Literacy by Design Self-Assessment

Name of the platform: Google Search

Date: August 9, 2024

Purpose of the document:

This document has been designed for online services¹ to demonstrate how their work and products align with the [Best Practice Principles for Media Literacy by Design](#). As you engage with this assessment, consider the following key areas:

1. **Proactivity, priority, transparency and accountability;**
2. **User-centric design and timely interventions;**
3. **Monitoring and evaluation.**

Ofcom recently became the UK's online safety regulator following the Online Safety Act 2023 (the Act) becoming law. Ofcom's media literacy work will make an important contribution to the implementation of the changes under the Act, in particular the changes to Ofcom's media literacy duties introduced by the Act. However, this work should not be interpreted as a statement of our policy on other guidance or our codes of practice under the Act or prejudice any further work to develop policy in relation to that Act. Whilst there are close links between the policy areas of media literacy and online safety, they are distinct. Our media literacy work, which includes these principles, is broader in scope than online safety, in terms of both the content and services to which it applies. In addition, as a voluntary initiative we have more discretion in the recommendations we make here than in the online safety codes. Our media literacy work goes beyond requirements specified in the Act to consider what more online services can do to support people to use, understand and create online media and communications in a variety of contexts.

With this in mind, materials submitted here may be repurposed for Ofcom's work under the Act.

We would like you to engage in a reflective process. This self-assessment form invites you to analyse how your organisation approaches media literacy on-platform (as part of the design process or through on-platform interventions).

- We specifically encourage you to identify potential areas for improvement you would like to focus on over the next few months. This approach allows us to better understand how platforms monitor and evaluate media literacy interventions on an ongoing basis, whilst allowing us to further encourage the adoption of the principles.

¹ Platforms/online services include social media, search, video-sharing and gaming services.

- We ask that you define what success looks like, and how this will be measured for each piece of work to promote media literacy on-platform. As per principle 11, we ask that you establish media literacy outcomes and media literacy outcome indicators wherever possible.²

This self-assessment exercise is also an opportunity to share knowledge with a broader audience. Other services, academics, charities, and the general public can learn from what's currently working well and what challenges exist. We may wish to use some of the self-assessment completed to publish a summary of the work being undertaken by platforms. We would be in touch on the specifics before publication, however, it is worth flagging if there is anything commercially sensitive or confidential in your response at this point. Transparency and knowledge sharing has been [a recurrent ask from stakeholders](#). By fostering open communication and sharing insights, we can collectively enhance our understanding and drive positive change, leading to a collective commitment to media literacy.

In responding to the questions in this document, we encourage you to assess your practices and the extent to which they align with Ofcom's Best Practice Principles for Media Literacy by Design as part of actively contributing to a more informed and media literate society. We want to make knowledge sharing a formal aspiration for online services to ensure that everyone has clarity over the work that is being done and to foster collaboration between stakeholders.

Contact: If you have any questions about the Media Literacy by Design project, please feel free to get in touch with the MSOM team (makingsenseofmedia@ofcom.org.uk).

² Media literacy outcomes are ideally a benefit received by the target audience to be achieved as a result of the work. Media literacy outcome indicators are measurable pieces of evidence that allow users to track the change that has taken place as a result of their intervention.

Proactivity, priority, transparency and accountability

Please provide an example of how your platform already demonstrates adoption of at least one principle in this category. How is success measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

Google Search has been industry leading in its investments in media and information literacy. This includes not only off-platform training (e.g. “Super Searchers” and “Be Internet Awesome”) but also in-product features such as About this image, About this page, About this result, and more in the “ATX” suite of information literacy features. These provide on-demand contextual information about results and content that appear in Google Search. To help make these tools available more widely and easily, many of these features are integrated into other Google products, as well. For example, About this image is also integrated into “[Circle to Search](#)”, and About this result and About this page are available through the Google app, as well.

In addition to these in-product features, we’ve also invested in an off-platform training program on information literacy called “Super Searchers”. [Super Searchers](#) is a train-the-trainer program that focuses on educating users how to examine and analyse the content they find online. This training program has been rolled out across the US, EMEA, and APAC together with partners like [Public Libraries 2030](#), the [American Library Association / Public Libraries Association](#), and [Mahattattva](#). It is also available in English as a self-paced course on Google’s [Skillshop](#).

Please provide an example of how your platform can make more progress to further demonstrate further adoption of principles in this category. How will success be measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

We are expanding both our “ATX” suite of products to more markets and languages, and success metrics will be adoption and use. Similarly, we’re now scaling our Super Searchers program and aim, globally, to reach more than 1 million users trained by 30,000 teachers, librarians, and others.

User-centric design and timely interventions

Please provide an example of how your platform already demonstrates adoption of at least one principle in this category. How is success measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

About this result (ATR), About this image (ATI), and About this page (ATP) are user-centric by design, as they bring relevant information into one place to help users answer the question: “can I trust this?”. These products improve search skills while helping users understand the results they are seeing, and are available to users at the time of a search, when someone may need this information the most.

Super Searchers demonstrates the principle of timely interventions, as it is a collaborative program building capacity for librarians and teachers to empower their patrons and the general public with information literacy. It seeks to achieve the following objectives: (a) provide trainers with the skills to build the information literacy capacity of the general public; (b) increase the information literacy capacity of the general public.

Google Search also partnered with YouGov and Poynter on a report ([‘A Global Study on Information Literacy’](#)) that summarised findings from a survey of 8,585 respondents from 7 countries around the world (including the UK and Germany). The report focused on consumer habits and practices related to misinformation, search literacy, and information journeys - see the infographic and full findings.

Please provide an example of how your platform can make more progress to further demonstrate further adoption of principles in this category. How will success be measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

See above with regard to scaling both the ATX products and Super Searchers programming.

Monitoring and evaluating

Please provide an example of how your platform already demonstrates adoption of at least one principle in this category. How is success measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

For About this result, About this page, and About this image, the Google Search team held multiple 1:1s and focus groups – in addition to user research – to ensure that Search’s product features were designed with information literacy best practices in mind. For example, all of these features help users more efficiently and effectively engage in [lateral reading](#), an evidence-based practice for media and information literacy.

We have been transparent about these features including through [our reporting as part of the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation](#). These information literacy features have been influenced by the COR and SIFT methods for information literacy, which has been documented in various places including this [blog post](#) by the creator of the SIFT method.

For more information on these efforts, please see the following blog posts:

- [About this result](#)
- [About this result and Super Searchers](#)
- [About this page](#)
- [About this image](#)
- [New ways to access About this image](#)

Please provide an example of how your platform can make more progress to further demonstrate further adoption of principles in this category. How will success be measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

Updates to Search – including those related to our in-product information literacy tools – go through a rigorous evaluation process. To learn more about testing and evaluation practices for Google Search at large, please see [this page](#) on our How Search Works website.