KS3 Media Literacy Key Vocabulary Glossary

This key vocabulary glossary presents essential terms and definitions for Key Stage 3 Media Literacy in chronological order based on the department Scheme of Learning.

Year 7 Media Literacy Vocabulary List

Vocabulary terms for Year 7 presented in chronological order of learning throughout the year.

Key Term	Definition
Construct	To build, assemble, or create an image or idea over time through deliberate choices.
Digital Footprint	The traceable mark of data, activity, and personal information left behind by an individual's online actions.
Boundary	A limit or boundary line that defines acceptable behavior and distinguishes between personal privacy and public exposure.
Interpersonal	Relating to relationships, communication, or interactions between individuals.
Interface	The visual layout and interactive elements (e.g., likes, comments, streaks, DMs) through which users interact with a platform.
Amplification	The process of increasing the reach, volume, or visibility of a message or piece of media content.
Virality	The speed and scale with which an image, video, or post spreads organically from user to user online.
Perceived Anonymity	The false belief that one's identity and actions are completely hidden or untraceable when interacting online.
Retention	The ability of a platform or service to keep a user's continuous

Key Term	Definition
	interest and active participation over time.
Persuasive Design	Features deliberately built into software psychology (e.g., infinite scroll, auto-play) to maximise user focus.
Attention Economy	A business model where human screen time and mental focus are monetised and traded as valuable commercial assets.
Distortion	The action of giving a misleading, false, or exaggerated account or impression of reality.
Highlight Reel	A curated collection displaying only the best, most attractive, or most successful moments of a person's life.
Digital Body Image	The perception and feelings an individual holds about their physical appearance, shaped by exposure to filtered imagery.
Bias	An inclination or prejudice toward or against a particular perspective, often in an unfair or unobjective way.
Misinformation	False or inaccurate information shared accidentally, without deliberate intent to deceive others.
Disinformation	False or manipulated information deliberately created and distributed to deceive, mislead, or harm.
Engagement	The measure of user activity, interaction, and attention spent on a specific piece of media content.
Algorithm	A mathematical rule or automated system used by software to filter, rank, and recommend content to users.
Clickbait	Sensationalised, exaggerated, or misleading media headlines crafted specifically to lure users into clicking links.
Monetisation	The process of converting an asset, service, user activity, or personal information into revenue or profit.
Data Harvesting	The automated process of gathering personal details, browsing

Key Term	Definition
	history, and online habits across platforms.
Targeted Advertising	Commercial promotional messages delivered specifically to individuals based on harvested personal data.
Coercion	The practice of persuading or forcing someone to perform an action using pressure, threats, or urgency.
Phishing	A fraudulent attempt to extract passwords or sensitive data by disguising communications as trustworthy entities.
Social Engineering	Psychological manipulation techniques used to trick individuals into handing over confidential information or access.
Compulsion	An irresistible impulse or urge to act in a specific way, often despite knowing it carries negative risks.
Loot Box	A virtual item in a video game containing randomised cosmetic or functional rewards purchased with real or game currency.
Gamification	The integration of game design mechanics (e.g., points, levels, chance rewards) into non-game contexts.
Filter	To assess, screen, and block unwanted, harmful, or inappropriate media material from a content feed.
Toxic Content	Online material that promotes hate speech, discriminatory attitudes, misogyny, self-harm, or graphic violence.
Idealisation	The act of representing a person, relationship, or situation as perfect or far better than it is in reality.
Trope	A familiar, recurring motif, cliché, or narrative device used in media representations of social dynamics.
Consent	Clear, informed, uncoerced, and revocable permission given by an individual to participate in an activity.
Synthesis	Combining various data inputs, concepts, or elements to

Key Term	Definition
	generate a new, coherent output.
Generative AI	Artificial intelligence models capable of generating text, imagery, or code in response to user prompts.
Authenticity	The quality of being genuine, real, and verifiable as coming from its stated origin.
Deepfake	Media where a person's face, voice, or body is synthetically altered or swapped using deep learning AI tools.
Synthetic Media	Digital media (video, audio, text, image) created, modified, or entirely generated by automated AI algorithms.
Non-Consensual Image Sharing	The distribution of private or intimate photographs or videos of a person without their explicit consent.
Stigma	Negative social attitudes, disapproval, or discrimination directed toward a person or topic (e.g., mental health).
Self-Regulation	The capacity to monitor, manage, and adapt one's emotional reactions, attention, and online habits.
Digital Detox	A deliberate period of abstaining from electronic devices and social media to reduce stress and reset focus.
Grooming	A manipulative process where a predator builds trust, affection, and emotional reliance with a vulnerable person to exploit them.
County Lines	Illegal drug distribution networks that use mobile technology and social platforms to recruit young people for transport.
Glamourisation	Portraying dangerous, harmful, or illegal activities as highly attractive, exciting, or socially prestigious.
Desensitisation	A reduction in emotional responsiveness and empathy toward real-world violence resulting from repeated media exposure.

Year 8 Media Literacy Vocabulary List

Vocabulary terms for Year 8 presented in chronological order of learning throughout the year.

Key Term	Definition
Passive Engagement	User interactions measured automatically (e.g., hover time, clip loops) without active clicks or likes.
Dwell Time	The precise duration of time a user lingers over a post or video while scrolling through a feed.
Feedback Loop	A system cycle where automated user tracking outputs continuously refine and shape future media inputs.
Advocacy	Public support, active campaigning, or recommendation for a cause, idea, policy, or social change.
Call-Out Culture	A public shaming phenomenon where individuals are publicly confronted and censured on online platforms.
Infringement	The breaking, violation, or unauthorised circumvention of a legal right, law, contract, or policy.
Intellectual Property (IP)	Legal rights protecting original human creations of the mind (art, writing, music, code) from unauthorised reproduction.
Data Scraping	The automated extraction of vast quantities of media data from websites to build machine learning models.
Fragmented	Divided into separate, distinct, or uncoordinated parts, profiles, or identity expressions.
Digital Avatar	A graphical representation or virtual character created to represent an internet user in virtual environments.
Persona Shift	A psychological shift in behavior or tone when switching between anonymous and public digital identities.
Monopoly	Dominant or exclusive commercial ownership and control of a market, service, or infrastructure by a single entity.
Censorship	The restriction, filtering, or suppression of speech, public

Key Term	Definition
	information, news, or digital expression.
Polarisation	The division of a public audience or society into sharply contrasting, hostile, or opposing factions.
Echo Chamber	An online environment where a user only encounters media that confirms and amplifies their existing views.
Radicalisation Pipeline	An automated recommendation chain that guides users from mainstream content toward extreme ideological material.
Geopolitics	International politics and power dynamics shaped by geography, technology, strategy, and global media.
Cheapfake	Synthetic or deceptive media created through simple low-tech techniques (recontextualisation, speed alterations).
Verification Protocol	A structured step-by-step checklist used to test and verify the source, date, and accuracy of online media.
Data Broker	A commercial enterprise that collects, analyzes, and sells personal consumer information to corporate buyers.
Coercion	Forcing or pressuring an individual to act against their choice through threats, guilt, or manipulation.
Image-Based Abuse	The creation, distribution, or threat of sharing intimate images without explicit, voluntary consent.
Digital Consent	Voluntary, ongoing, and explicit permission regarding the sharing or storage of personal media online.
Escalation	A rapid rise in the intensity, seriousness, or danger of a situation requiring higher authority intervention.
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection command—a UK police agency addressing online child abuse.
Internet Watch	An international reporting portal focused on removing illegal child

Key Term	Definition
Foundation (IWF)	sexual abuse media from global networks.
Monetisation	The commercial practice of turning personal vulnerabilities or consumer insecurities into financial profit.
Social Comparison Theory	The psychological framework where individuals determine their self-worth by continuously evaluating themselves against others.
Validation	The recognition, acceptance, or confirmation that an individual's feelings or experiences are valid.
Dopamine Loop	A neurological reward cycle driven by novel online notifications that reinforces compulsive checking.
Saturation	A state where a system, space, or mind is completely filled or overwhelmed with continuous inputs.
Doomscrolling	Compulsively scrolling through distressing news content despite feeling upset or anxious.
Avoidance	The practice of deliberately avoiding difficult real-world emotions, conflicts, or duties.
Digital Escapism	Retreating into online worlds or feeds as a way to avoid dealing with real-world emotional pressures.
Coping Mechanism	An action, behavior, or psychological strategy used to manage stress, grief, or uncomfortable feelings.
Idealised	Represented as flawless, perfect, or simple, ignoring complex real-world dynamics.
Microtransaction	A low-cost digital purchase made within a mobile game or app to unlock virtual items or cosmetics.
Dark Pattern	User interface design choices engineered to trick users into making unintended purchases or choices.
Exploitation	The unfair treatment or manipulation of an individual to gain

Key Term	Definition
	benefit from their vulnerability.
Digital Grooming	The process of building false trust and dependency online to manipulate a target into illegal activity.
Cyber Recruitment	Using encrypted channels or gaming lobbies to enlist individuals into illegal gangs or cybercrime operations.
Glorification	Describing or portraying illegal or violent acts in a way that makes them seem prestigious or attractive.
Digital Posturing	Exaggerated or aggressive online displays designed to project threat, status, or territorial power.
Territoriality	Expressing or defending control over specific physical areas or digital spaces through threats and group displays.