

- Hack for Good

The term 'hacking' has many wide-spread negative associations, however, hacking can also be used effectively to bring about positive change. This 'Hack For Good' activity is planned to help change these misconceptions.

This activity should:

- Engage interest: Learners are presented with an altered version of a web page, e.g.. a BBC News item to arouse their initial interest but then this leads into a discussion about reliability, trust and wrong doing.
- Enlighten learners: Learners understand how trusted online content can be easily manipulated to portray an alternative version of reality.
- Equip learners: Learners develop their ability to identify trusted content as well as a basic understanding of the composition and structure of web pages.

- Steps for the Activity

While this activity can be taken by learners on their own, there is more potential for creativity if learners collaborate in pairs or small groups.

1. As part of the introduction to this workshop, the Activity Leader (or teacher) presents an altered form of an existing web page, e.g. this example in **'Related Links'** of a BBC News item which has been hacked.



One of these web pages has been hacked, can you guess which?

This may form part of a story that the Activity Leader presents to the group. The first part of the web page is intended to grab attention, the article content starts with an almost believable story but then progresses into something highly implausible.

Look at the titles of other news stories on the top right of the linked example.

2. After presenting the altered page, the Activity Leader then asks the learners a series of questions which should lead the learners toward the realisation that the page has been modified from the original and opens discussion around how this could have been achieved. This should include examining the URL of the page and any other clues that would cast doubt on the authenticity of the page.

3. The Activity Leader should then demonstrate the use of the Mozilla X-Ray Goggles tool and lead the learners through the model exercise. The leader should then suggest that learners try to modify existing web pages.
4. The Activity Leader must explain there is potential to cause real harm as well as good through the use of this tool, and so the tool must be used with caution.
5. Ask the learners in groups to propose a range of web pages they could modify to bring about positive change, e.g.. to enlighten audiences about the plight of children in developing countries, to recognise an achievement of a friend or family member.
6. **Show & Tell:** Allow a period of time before the end of the workshop activity for groups to share their creations with the others. An alternative to presenting to the whole group would be to nominate one person from each group to remain with the project while other members of the group travel around to discover what the others have created. On return to their base, the travellers should report back on what they saw.

Materials

- Essential - A computer with a modern browser, eg. Chrome or Firefox
- Essential - The bookmarks toolbar to be enabled in the browser
- Desirable - A web page that has already been altered

Discussion

- How can you check if a web page should be trusted or reliable?
- Is it wrong to hack web pages like this?
- Does hacking a page change the page for everybody? Why?
- What possible harm could be caused through misusing this tool?

Related Links

- www.goggles.mozilla.org
- www.exa.is/CMA1990
- www.exa.is/BBCoriginal
- www.exa.is/BBC hacked