

The
Economist

EDUCATIONAL
FOUNDATION



TOPICAL
TALK

Topical Talk

Help students make sense of the upcoming election coverage with practical strategies for conversations in your classroom

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What is Topical Talk?

Informed, open-minded and inspiring discussions about the news for students aged 10-16.



Headlines

Weekly, 1-hour resources on a breaking news story



Special Editions

5-hour schemes of work about a theme in the news, such as justice, climate, democracy



Festival 2025

7 Headlines resources plus online discussion, experts, live lessons and awards



Teacher toolkit

Additional support materials

Top tip #1: hear different perspectives

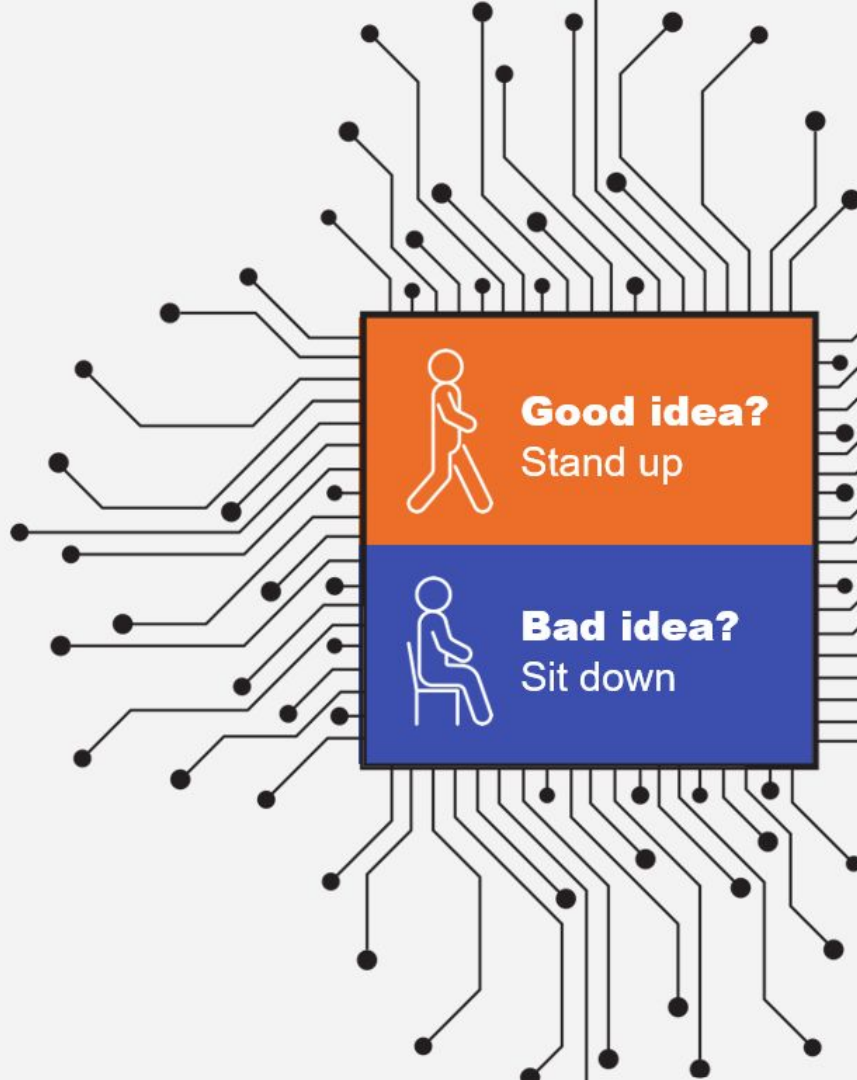
The following activity comes from our resource “UK election: should AI be allowed?”



Generative AI is being used more and more during election campaigns, especially across social media.

It can be used, amongst other things, to:

- Clone a candidate's voice and make a video of them speaking
- Very quickly create a lot of content that seems like it's coming from different people
- Create deepfake videos of celebrities
- Create writing which uses the same language and tone as someone



In this activity, you will decide and reflect on whether generative AI should or shouldn't be allowed in election campaigns by hearing different perspectives.

How worried do you think we should be about generative AI and elections?

(1-10)



Move based on how strongly you feel.

Someone who works for a politician uses generative AI to create videos of that politician speaking directly to different groups of people about what they'd do if they were elected

What if... the politician approves every video before it goes out?

**Should be
allowed**



**Shouldn't be
allowed**



Summarise another person's opinion in 7 words or less.

Someone who works for a politician uses generative AI to create a deepfake video of an opposing politician where they insult a group of people

What if... the opposing politician had used this kind of insulting language before?

Should be allowed



Shouldn't be allowed



Give your opinion in role as a famous person

An advert to promote a politician used generative AI to use the voice of someone famous to endorse them

What if... the famous person died years ago?

**Should be
allowed**



**Shouldn't be
allowed**



Without communicating verbally, decide who feels the most/least strongly and order yourselves accordingly on the line.

A politician's team used generative AI to create lots of fake social-media accounts to leave positive comments on posts about the politician

What if... instead of positive comments, the AI leave negative comments about an opponent?

Should be allowed



Shouldn't be allowed



Top tip #1: hear different perspectives

Introducing different perspectives helps students to think critically when they make up their own minds.

“What if...” questions help students to realise that critical thinking doesn’t stop being important once they’ve made up their mind!



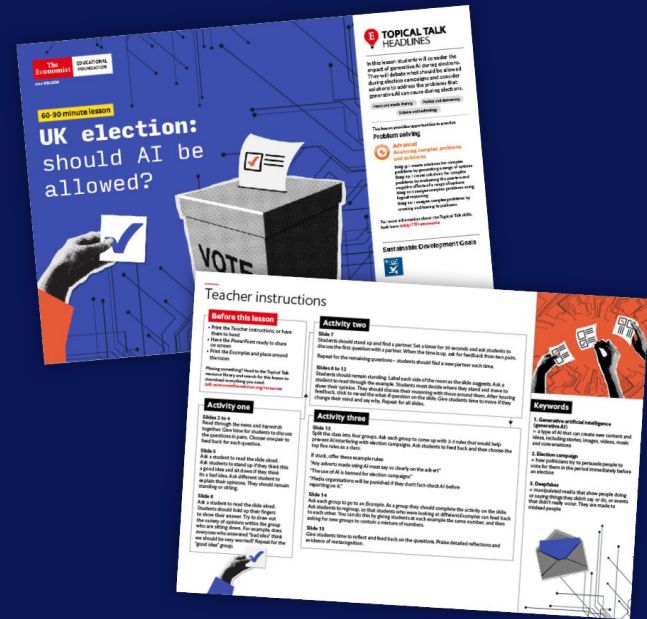
Top tip #2: use reliable and expert information

The last activity follows on from the previous one in the Headline “UK elections: should AI be allowed?”



Analyse complex problems by creating and testing hypotheses

Create solutions for complex problems by generating a range of options



Based on the scenarios you encountered in the previous activity, come up with three rules to stop AI interfering with elections.

1.

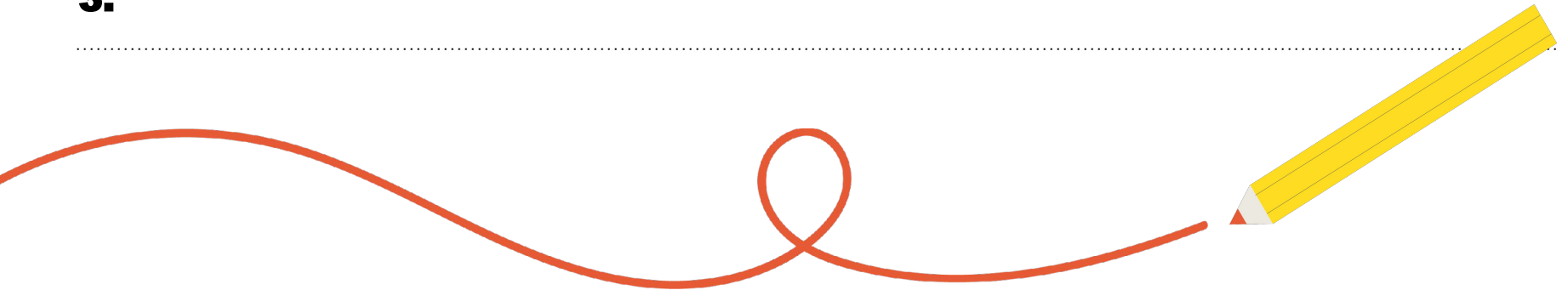
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2.

.....

3.

.....



Examples

Read your example.

What questions do you have about this example?

Would implementing your rules solve the problem?

If so, how? If not, why not?

Top tip #2: use reliable and expert information

All information in Topical Talk resources is rigorously fact-checked by Economist journalists and independent fact-checkers to ensure it is trustworthy and impartial.

Students are encouraged to value expert information by being given the agency to use it in discussion and debate. Reliable doesn't mean dry!



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Top tip #3:

think critically about the news topic and the news source



KNOWLEDGE



Who is involved?

When did it happen?

Where has it taken place?

When has it happened or is it still happening now?

Why has this happened?



Stick a new headline or article here each week

What do you think about this? Why?

What evidence supports your reason?

Can you list all of the reasons to support your view?

What are the causes of this situation/event?

What would the consequences of this be?



Do you agree with what people are doing here?

Is there a better way they could approach things?

If anything were possible, what could be done?

What other perspectives would help you think differently about this?

What might work here, but isn't guaranteed to succeed?

CREATIVITY



What were my main points?

What questions do you have?

What do you agree with in my argument?

How is your opinion similar or different to mine?

Is there anything that would change your mind?



Next steps

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