

Debunking

Debunking is a strategy designed to refute and correct false or misleading information that has already spread through various networks, such as social media. Strong evidence¹ indicates that debunking can change **beliefs and attitudes** based on misinformation.

Further, debunking impacts beliefs and attitudes more than prebunking (trying to stop false or misleading information before it spreads widely) or misinformation warnings (applying a tag or warning label).

How to Debunk

- Don't pick and choose what to refute. Refute the entire statement, not just parts of it. Avoid repeating details that support the misinformation.
- Introduce supporting information as part of the debunking message: Simply labeling something as "myth" and contrasting it with "facts" does not work as well.
- Supporting information includes details that provide counterarguments against the misinformation. But keep the language clear and simple.
- Timeliness is key; debunking works best when initiated swiftly.

The "Truth Sandwich"

One popular and effective debunking format is the "truth sandwich." This is when a message begins and ends with true statements, with a correction of false information in the middle.

Truth Sandwich in Action

Taking additional vitamin C will not prevent getting a cold.

It is a misconception that taking vitamin C supplements will protect against getting a cold. In fact, the human body cannot utilize too much vitamin C. Most people in the U.S. get their daily requirement of vitamin C through fruits and vegetables in their diet.

Medical experts agree that taking vitamin C will not reduce your risk of getting a cold.

Fact

¹ This evidence comes from six meta-analyses and 35 primary studies with more than 180,000 total participants.