

THIS WEEKEND'S FAMILY ACTIVITY

The Source Detective

GAME

SKILL: SOURCE CHECKING

45 MINUTES

RECOMMENDED AGE RANGE

Ages 8–14; old enough to search the web independently for homework and curious enough about technology to engage with testing what it actually knows.

WHAT YOU NEED

A phone, tablet, or computer

Index cards or sticky notes

A pen or marker

ACTIVITY STEPS

- 01 Pick Your Questions.** Each player writes down two topics they are genuinely curious about on index cards. These can be anything: a sport, an animal, a food, something from school, a current event. The topics do not need to be important. The game works better when people actually care about the answer.
- 02 Search and Read the AI Answer.** One player types their first topic into Google. When the page loads, they read the AI-generated block at the top of the results out loud to the group, without showing anyone the screen. Everyone else just listens to what the AI said.
- 03 Pick the Claim to Check.** Everyone listening writes down one specific thing from the AI answer they want to verify: a number, a name, a date, or a statement about how something works. Each person writes their chosen claim on a separate card.
- 04 Find the Source.** Set a timer for five minutes. As a group, scroll past the AI answer to the links below it. Click one. Read enough to find out whether the AI's claim holds up. Does the article actually say what the AI claimed? Did the AI cite a source, or just state a fact with no trail?
- 05 Share and Score.** After time is up, each player reads their claim and says whether they confirmed or contradicted it. Award one point for every discrepancy the group finds between the AI's answer and what the original source actually says. Rotate who picks the next topic and repeat until everyone has gone at least twice.

THE DEEPER LESSON

Common Sense Media tested Google's AI search tools more than 2,600 times in July 2026 and found that when submitted homework assignments, the AI completed all of them. The AI is built for speed and confidence, not for asking whether your child needs to learn something or whether the answer fits their specific situation. When a family plays The Source Detective and finds a mismatch between what the AI said and what the original source actually says, they are not learning to distrust the internet. They are learning that the answer at the top of a Google page is always the beginning of a search, never the end of one.

CONVERSATION STARTER

If you found out the AI answer was wrong right now, how would you know, and what would you do to find out what was actually true?

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