In a soon-to-be-released Institute for Public Relations study, 63% of respondents said that misinformation was a “major problem” in the United States. Misinformation, the unintentional dissemination of false, incorrect or erroneous information, can lead people to hold inaccurate beliefs and make misguided decisions. Communicating the inaccuracy of false claims is necessary for helping people understand that they have been misled. However, it is clear that just identifying falsehoods is often not enough to correct the resulting misperceptions.

**Provide detailed, but concise explanations**
Corrections with detailed counterarguments are more effective than simple warnings or rebuttals alone. The additional information can help people understand an issue better and revise any misled beliefs.

**Explain using alternative accounts**
Refuting a false claim often leaves gaps in people’s understanding. If those gaps aren’t filled, debunked information might still be used when thinking about an issue. Alternative causal explanations clarify why something is untrue by providing an account of how a situation actually unfolded.

**One**
Choose your communicator wisely
Communicators that align with someone’s identity or ideology are also more likely to be trusted when correcting false or misleading claims.

**Two**
Inoculate for misinformation
Refutations provide information to correct misperceptions after exposure. Inoculation provides the facts pre-emptively to prevent misperceptions from developing in the first place. People are less likely to fall for misinformation if they are warned ahead of time and explained why it is incorrect.

**Three**
Educate and support analytical thinking
More engaged thinkers are less susceptible to misinformation. One way to encourage a more evaluative mindset is to draw attention to the growing problem of false information and its impact on themselves and on society. Education and information campaigns around media and digital literacy can also support more efficient analysis of the information that we are exposed to.

**Four**
Correct as soon as possible
The longer a false claim goes without being corrected, the more likely people will be exposed to it and process it as accurate. Repeated exposure to misinformation makes it seem more likely to be true, even if it is eventually corrected.

**Five**
Don’t repeat misinformation without the right context
Misinformation should not be repeated unless it is presented in a way that helps people recall that it is inaccurate. Mentions of the misinformation should emphasize why the claim is wrong or misleading and not the claim itself.

**Six**
Use graphs and other visualizations
Graphs and other data visualizations can be easier to understand than text that conveys the same information. Visualizations are useful for debunking misinformation because they attract attention and can provide information with greater clarity and ease, while appearing less potentially biased.

**Seven**
Affirm the audience’s sense of self
Correcting misinformation is especially difficult when the belief is central to someone’s identity or world view. To reach these audiences, it is important to affirm their sense of self by having them reflect on positive traits and values they hold, and by reassuring them that their concern and interest in an issue is important, even if their information isn’t accurate.

**Eight**
Repeat corrections
Information that seems more familiar is judged as more likely to be true. Repeated exposure to corrections and counterarguments to misinformation can help promote more accurate, well-informed beliefs.

**Nine**
Two helpful hints on why visuals matter
They can help people understand the content of the message better and retain the information for longer. Visuals can also help to catch the audience’s attention and keep them engaged.

**Ten**
Affirm the audience’s sense of self
Communications that affirm the audience’s identity or world view are more likely to be accepted and remembered. This approach can be particularly effective in situations where misinformation is being spread by someone who shares the audience’s identity or ideology.

**Read the full study at:**
www.instituteforpr.org/10-ways-to-combat-misinformation