

Digital Citizenship

Lesson Title: Protecting Your Digital Footprint

High School



Essential Question:

Why is it important to consider what your digital footprint says about you?

Materials:

- Access to the Internet
- Seeing is Believing Scenarios
- Digital Footprint Template

Procedure:

Introduction:

1. Draw or post a picture of a footprint on a visible area. Ask students to put their comments about your artistic talents aside and discuss what we can learn about someone from his/her footprint. Be sure to go beyond the basics of shoe size and how the person walks; the discussion should include the use of footprints to discover information in crime scenes and in missing person cases, to determine medical diagnoses, to create metaphorical references, to create art, etc.
2. Transition to a discussion of digital footprints. (According to internetsociety.org, your digital footprint is everything you leave behind as you use the Internet. Comments on social media, Skype calls, app use, and email records are all part of your online history and can potentially be seen by other people or tracked in a database.) How is a digital footprint different than a footprint one might make in the sand or in cement?
3. Ask students what they know about the different ways we leave digital footprints and share the following ways from Internet Society:

Websites And Online Shopping

Retailers and product review sites often leave cookies on your system which can track your movement from site-to-site, allowing targeted advertisements that can show you products you've been recently reading about or looking at online.

Social Media.

All those Retweets, and Facebook comments (even private ones) leave a record. Make sure you know which default privacy setting options for your social media accounts have been selected, and keep an eye on them. Sites often introduce new policies and settings that increase the visibility of your data. They may rely on you just clicking “OK” to whatever terms they are introducing without reading them.

Mobile Phones, Tablets, or Laptops.

Some websites will build a list of different devices you have used to visit those sites. While this can often be used as a way to help secure your account, it is important to understand the information being collected about your habits.

Source: <http://www.internetsociety.org/your-digital-footprint-matters>

4. Logging off a website or deleting your account does not erase your digital footprint, and everything you post becomes a part of that footprint. It is not possible to control every aspect of our digital footprints, but in this world where college admissions personnel and possible employers check backgrounds for admissions and job offers, it is becoming increasingly important for people to control as much of their digital footprint as possible.
5. Review with students that when people search your digital footprint, they are looking to see if you:
 - Present yourself in a professional manner. This means your photos and texts use appropriate language and show you in the best light possible.
 - Are a “good fit” for the culture of the organization. This means that your posts convey a commitment to a cause or a specific topic that interests the organization and that you have a personality that fits with their mission. Do other people post things that put you in a good light?
 - Are qualified for the position or placement. Do you have the skills the job or the school requires? Do you communicate well? They want to see if your social media site shows you have skills that fit their needs.
6. Ask students what they believe they can control and what they cannot control about their digital footprints. Make a chart in a visible place and collect their answers.
7. Use the Internet to complete the following exercise:
 - Have students google their own names.
 - How many different people have your name? Do you see yourself?
 - Google your name and more information, such as first name, last name and city. Now what do you see?
 - Google another person you know. What do you see? (Search images, too.)
 - How many entries? What images are available for anyone to see?
 - What does this search tell you about the possibility of a college admissions officer or a new employer’s ability to look at your digital footprint? Is this something you want them to be able to do? Why or why not?
 - How does the information you have just found on the Internet connect to the list you created of what you can and cannot control about your digital footprint?
8. If Internet access is not available, distribute copies of the Seeing is Believing Scenarios or post where all can see clearly. Ask students to discuss whether or not each of the scenarios is fair or unfair and to explain their reasons. This can be done in small groups or as a class. Have students discuss the scenarios in light of their chart of what they can or cannot control about their digital footprints and have them consider what could have been done to clean up the person’s digital footprint in advance.

Conclusion

Review the themes of the lesson and close with a discussion of any/all of the following: Why should you care about managing your digital footprint? What image do you wish to portray to others? How do you accomplish this face to face? How can you accomplish this online?

As an extension, have students create an artistic version of what they would like their digital footprint to communicate. A template is provided.

Sources:

- <https://www.smores.com/6pbw-what-s-your-digital-footprint>
- <https://www.commonsemmedia.org/search/digital%20footprint>

Your Digital Footprint

Your online life is an open book! What do you want others to know? Fill in the footprint below with words or drawings of what you would like your image to be.



Scenarios:

Seeing is Believing... or It's Not Fair!

Scenario One

Justin had been looking forward to becoming a senior peer leader since his freshman year. His application was complete, totally spell checked and he felt confident that his interview went well. The committee of teachers had one more task before the final peer leadership cohort was selected and announced... a quick Facebook check of all candidates. The school zero tolerance policy was strict – and competition fierce for these peer leadership positions. A search of Justin's name on Facebook brought up a group photo, lots of kids toasting with red cups. It didn't look good. With so many candidates, the selection committee thought, why take a chance?

Scenario Two

To help support their employee's family, Sarah's mom's company offers college scholarships to five graduating high school seniors. She completed her application, her grades are decent and she was really, really hoping to receive a little extra spending money to start off her freshman year in college. As part of the review process, the company's head of communications completes an online search for each candidate. They really want to support the "cream of the crop." Much to their surprise, Sarah's Twitter feed is filled unsavory re-tweets and plenty of foul language. It's just not what this ultra-conservative company committee had in mind.

Scenario Three

Raphael likes kids and thought being a summer camp counselor would be a great summer job – and good for that resume building his high school counselor is always talking about.

He completed the application and the interview, and thought it went well. They talked about how important it is to set a good example for young kids, and Raphael spoke about the role models in his own life. As part of the final review process, the camp staff did an online search, finding photos of Raphael with a cigarette dangling from his mouth. Wow, they thought, that's not the behavior or message we want to provide to our campers. They decided to take a chance.