Grades 4-6

Digital Footprint: A Positive Digital Image

ROGERS
cybersecure
catalyst

A digital footprint informs how people view others, based on information that exists on the Internet. Everything people post, comment on and share with others is there to stay, and paints a picture of who they appear to be to others. Whether these posts contribute to a positive or negative refl ection of who they really are is up to them, but the first step is to understand some basic Internet best practices. Why is this important? Because although it may take some time and effort to build, maintain or repair – a display of their best self will help enhance future opportunities, and help them be viewed by others as a kind and responsible person.

This resource contains information for parents/guardians to help them communicate with kids on how to develop a positive digital footprint by showcasing their most favourable characteristics, and describes the problems that can arise as a result of a negative digital footprint.

⬡A DEFINITION

What could lead to a negative digital footprint?

Sometimes kids use connected devices without fully understanding the risks associated with their digital footprint. To begin the conversation, it might be helpful to first outline the types of posts that could damage their online reputation:

- Saying mean things about other people, whether it's aimed at one person through a text message, or to a group of people in a chatroom.

- Sending or sharing inappropriate photographs, videos, images or posts.

- Selecting rude or distasteful screen names or email addresses.

- Liking or sharing an inappropriate post – even if they didn't write it, liking and sharing it shows others that they agree with it, even if they don't!

Remember:
Take care with what you share!

Focus on creating a positive digital footprint!

Kids can build a positive image for themselves and others, by remembering the following guiding principles:

- Be kind and respectful toward others at all times.

- Keep posts positive (e.g., highlight special skills, achievements, helping other people, etc.).

- Humour is a common and great tool, but kids need to be careful! Keep humour light and positive by avoiding sensitive topics, and never use humour to get a laugh at someone else's expense.

- The use of tags (tagging or hashtags) can help kids create a positive digital footprint through connecting with people and organizations they know.

- Make an effort to help people/organizations they know build a positive digital footprint by recognizing their achievements. That could mean giving community members, companies, volunteers, teachers or other students a shout-out online!

Go positive, not personal!

Remember to always keep your personal information private, even when creating a positive digital footprint.

Hashtags:
Often represented by the pound symbol (#) on your keyboard. Used on social media websites to make it easier to find posts or information related to a theme or the words being tagged.

Tagging:
Often represented by the "at" symbol (@) on your keyboard. Used on social media websites before typing the name of a person or organization, to get their attention and notify them that they've been mentioned.
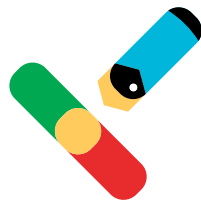
Conversation Starter:

What are some additional ways you can help others build their positive digital footprint? Can you think of anything that someone has posted about you that would help others view you in a positive light?

Protect their digital footprint

Once kids have started building their positive image online, how can they now protect it? For example, what if their social media profiles were taken over by someone and this individual then posted off ensive content? This sort of situation would not technically be the kid's fault, but would still cause substantial damage to their reputation. How can kids protect themselves, and their image, online?

- By creating strong passwords and using unique passwords for each online account.

- Enabling multi-factor authentication (MFA).

- Keeping an eye out for suspicious activities.

- If profiles are breached, report it immediately to the platform's security team and change all passwords.

Multi-factor authentication:
Often referred to as "MFA", it's a security feature that verifies a user's identity by requiring two or more pieces of evidence (factors) or credentials such as passwords, numeric codes or answers to unique security questions.

Tip!
Stronger, more secure passwords are usually longer (about 8-12 characters), and contain upper/lower case letters, numbers and symbols.

Once it's there – it's always there

Despite what many people assume, there is no such thing as a "delete" button for the Internet. Deleting a post, message or anything shared online may remove it from a social media account, email inbox or website, but it's never completely gone. How is this possible?

- People may take screenshots of private messages or friends-only intended posts and then share them publicly.

- Search engines may store posts and images in their cache.

- Social media platforms like Twitter or Facebook have viewer tools that gather and store posts from profi les and publicly share them on their site.

There are no exceptions! All content shared online, even on platforms that claim messages disappear forever after a period of time (like Snapchat), or those that claim they cannot be screen captured, content is always there and can be found.
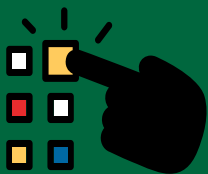
Remember:
When accepting terms and conditions for apps, ensure you understand what you're granting access to and that you're comfortable with it.

Create a more positive footprint

Parents/guardians need to have a tough, yet important, conversation with kids if they find or suspect that kids have shared questionable content online. Start the conversation by letting kids know that everyone makes mistakes – no one is expected to be perfect. Ask them to take the following steps:

- Delete posts or comments that don't reflect well on them. Even though there's a chance that something posted online is "always there", deleting posts makes them harder to find, and the act of removing them shows personal growth.

- Next, focus on posting positive content; over a period of time, this will demonstrate a pattern of good behaviour and judgement.
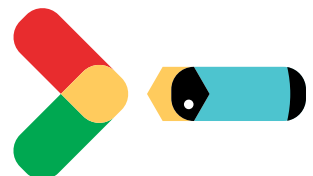
Activities are a useful way for kids to test and demonstrate their knowledge on the topic covered in this resource. Have them try the activities themselves, and offer support when needed.

Positive Digital Footprint Word Search

Can you find the keywords related to a positive digital footprint? As you find the words, think about what they mean, what you have learned, and how you can share this information with others!

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N P U B L I C A T I O N C M B
R B I E N V E I L L A N C E X
O C M B S Y H S N R Z A H U R
M K O J Y S Y P E V B O G N E
J E P M R A M O A O T C Z J P
B O M O P J P P N R H X H O A
P H W P X O T R U C T R U J R
E L J H R C R O O B O A J O E
R P E D L E K T E T L N G Z R
M O N V Y V I B E U E I T E C
A S L H N E Z N P M C G C R R
N I I V J E U K T T E H E W T
E T G X W Y N V A E R N G R A
N I N L O D Q A E A E U T F B
T F E W A O K A T M F A Q X J
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Permanent

Sharing

Repair

Behaviour

Protect

Posts

Footprint

Online

Kind

Positivie

Public

Posts:
Messages, photos or videos that are shared on the Internet for everyone to see.

Practice Positive Posting!

- Read the sample positive post, what about this post makes it "positive"?

- Using the computer, or a paper and pen, create your positive post about someone you know (it could be a friend, parent/ guardian, teacher or a pet!).

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Sample Positive Post

A big **#thankyou** to our local -animal shelter for all the help in adopting my new **#puppy**, Skip! I am excited to care for a puppy – that means train, feed and walk him! If you're looking for a new pet, consider adopting!
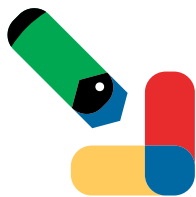
TWEET

Tip!
Try including pictures or a drawing as part of your positive post – images usually draw the attention of others and can make them feel happy.

D FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on cybersecurity, or to continue the conversation and learning process, visit the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security website:

https://cyber.gc.ca/fr/.

Kids Help Phone:

Contact by text message at 686868 or by phone at 1-800-668-6868 from across Canada, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; or access their resources online: kidshelpphone.ca