



## Digital Fluency



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

If we measure technology skills by how much time kids and teens spend online, they must be digital experts. Daily consumption of digital media by kids is estimated at more than 10 hours a day for all screen time (<http://bit.ly/2niZ6Va>).

But media consumption is not a skillset. The jobs of the future will require mastery of technology and the ability to create new content — not just watch it.

### **The difference between digital literacy and digital fluency**

If you can use devices proficiently and navigate apps with ease, you are digitally literate. That's step one, and it is an important skill. Kids learn to use games and stream videos at very young ages. They are comfortable around the technology — they have basic competency.

Step two is mastering digital tools in order to apply skills in one technology to another. It is digital fluency.

“How is digital fluency different from digital literacy? In learning a foreign language, a literate person can read, speak, and listen for understanding in the new language. A fluent person can create something in the language: a story, a poem, a play, or a conversation. Similarly, digital literacy is an understanding of how to use the tools; digital fluency is the ability to create something new with those tools.”

— Jennifer Sparrow, Senior Director of Teaching & Learning  
Penn State University (<http://bit.ly/35gD6LM>)

Being fluent means participating in conversations rather than just understanding them. Digital fluency moves students from being content consumers to content creators with skills that translate to a variety of platforms. It is “the ability to move nimbly and confidently from one technology to another.”

### **Tips to help children build digital fluency**

“A report by the World Economic Forum notes that 65% of the children in primary school in 2017 will have jobs that do not yet exist and for which their education will fail to prepare them.” <https://cnn.it/332vpqql>

Today's children need excellent technology skills for their future careers and in general, so they can access the educational and financial opportunities in an increasingly digitized society, opportunities such as job applications, personal finance, healthcare, community engagement,

and so on. Building digital skills is a lifelong process, and the skills will evolve as technology changes and new developments arise.

Parents can help their children learn skills now that will pave the way for future learning as technology changes and give them confidence to try new things and make good technology choices.

The Tech Advocate outlines the following essential skills for future work:

- 1. Coding:** a universal language that is useful for technical and non-technical careers. A basic understanding of computer language such as HTML and CSS creates a shared understanding and a sense of knowing what can and cannot be done with web pages. Find free lessons online at Khan Academy or Code.org.
- 2. Collaboration:** online project management tools such as Base Camp, Trello and the collaborative functionality of Google Docs allows a student to begin experimenting with effective online collaboration.
- 3. Cloud Software:** an essential part of document management. The cloud is used to store everything from photos to research projects to term papers and music. Students must also know how to find and access the files they save in the cloud.
- 4. Word Processing Software:** used with collaboration and cloud software. Google has a suite of products and Microsoft Office is an office standard. Word processing apps provide an easy way to learn new interfaces for the same tasks. Be sure to have your student practice with different ones.
- 5. Screencasting:** use screencasting apps to produce beginning videos. This is a great way for the novice videographer to make effective videos, which is a useful skill for explaining a topic as well as articulating what you are thinking. Ideal tools for teaching students how to screencast include Screencast-o-Matic and Camtasia.
- 6. Personal Archiving:** essential for organizing our massive digital footprint. Students must learn skills to archive information so they can access it later. Students should be taught concepts such as metadata, tagging, keywords, and categories succinctly and directly to help them start thinking about how they are represented online.
- 7. Information Evaluation:** reinforcing critical thinking skills to judge credibility of sites and information. Students should know how to identify credible sources and where to go for trustworthy information.
- 8. Social Media Savvy:** important because social media serves different purposes depending on the user, the technology, and the need. Students must have guidance and an opportunity to practice using various social media.