



Being Good Digital Citizens



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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.

Today's students are known as digital natives — born after the widespread adoption of digital technology, starting in the 1990s. Many people assume that these digital natives are born with a complete understanding of technology and how to use all tech skillfully.

Assuming that students are completely competent users of all of the evolving technology tools and systems is a mistake. Many students have high levels of competency at using digital apps on their phones, but that doesn't always translate to skillful usage of the wide range of computer applications. That requires exposure to a variety of technology tools and regular practice. Technology is still a learned skill.

It also doesn't mean they have the good judgment for social media interaction. Just because they know how to use the tool, does not mean they know how to use it appropriately.

Responsible social media use

Almost all students use social media. A survey by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry found that 90% of teens ages 13-17 have used social media, and 75% have at least one active profile. <http://bit.ly/2L3QvkO>

It's not surprising to find that teens are socially active online. The surprising part, for them at least, is the controversy they create with impulsive or ignorant posts.

Many students have lost job offers and college acceptances over posts with racist and sexist comments and photos of illegal activities, such as drinking. They may regret the immature or unwise post, but they still face long-term consequences because the internet keeps a permanent record.

Being a good digital citizen

Social media isn't going away, and it has benefits for social connection, networking, online learning, and more. But it also poses risks to children through cyberbullying, self-esteem issues and safety.

Parents should understand the risks and take charge of their children's online presence to help them be responsible. Start with digital citizenship lessons. Digital Citizenship is the practice of using the internet and technology safely, respectfully and responsibly. Smart Social is a good source of internet safety tips for parents. They offer a plan for parents to help their children become good digital citizens.

Privacy recommendations

Students should begin their online presence with full privacy settings and gradually expand their public presence:

Ages 0-13 – Should have an entirely private online presence. *This is a legal requirement through the Children’s Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA), which protects the private, identifying information about children under 13.*

Ages 14-15 – Start having a family discussion regarding what should be public

Age 15 – Consider posting some positive images and volunteer photos on social media

Age 17 – Colleges should be able to find a positive online footprint for your student

Discuss online content with your child

- **Parents:** Go through all of your child’s past social media images.
- Delete inappropriate images or posts that may not represent your child’s current maturity level.

- **Teens (with parents permission):** Consider creating a LinkedIn and YouTube account under your real name. These will positively impact your digital footprint.
- On your YouTube and LinkedIn accounts, add links to websites where your achievements are featured, such as a school website, or team sports website.
- List school, hobbies, awards and sports accomplishments in your account descriptions.
- Highlight volunteer and extracurricular activities.

Before posting anything online, ask yourself:

- Will this post help (or hurt) my chances of my dream college accepting me to my dream major?
- How would I feel if this post was shown publicly to my peers, neighbors, or to my relatives?

Keeping your own child safe is only part of digital citizenship. It is equally important for students to treat others with respect online and to stay safe.

Schools are also reinforcing these messages and have additional opportunities for safety lessons related to online activities in remote learning.

Reminders include zero tolerance for cyberbullying, personal information and password safety, treat your classmates and teacher with respect, show up prepared to learn and do your own assignments. See sample digital citizenship poster from Salem-Keizer Public Schools: <https://leslie.salkeiz.k12.or.us/digital-citizenship-document>

Common Sense Media tips for parents

It is difficult to keep up with fast-changing technology. Common Sense Media is a useful site for parents, covering updates and issues in media and technology.

www.commonsensemedia.org

Digital citizenship topics: www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/digital-citizenship