



What to Know

In a world where anything created online can be copied, pasted, and sent to thousands of people in a heartbeat, privacy starts to mean something different than simply guarding personal information. On the positive side, this culture of sharing holds tremendous promise for young people to express themselves, collaborate, and find support for their ideas and interests. However, the ease of online disclosure also poses risks for young people. A decision made in the spur of a moment — a funny picture, a certain post — can resurface years later. Something originally sent to a friend can be sent to a friend's friend, and so on. That's how secrets become headlines and how false information spreads fast and furiously — to classmates, teachers, college admissions officers, future employers, or the public at large.

Why Teach It

Help your students ...

- **become** aware of the "digital footprint" they leave online and reflect on the kind of personal information to share about themselves, depending on the content, context, and audience.
- **celebrate** a "culture of sharing" through digital media while considering some possible harmful effects of over-sharing.
- **learn** to respect the privacy of others online when tagging, posting, or copying other's personal information.

By guiding your students to self-reflect before they self-reveal, you can help them learn to consciously manage their own privacy online, as well as respect the privacy of others. If students aren't careful about what, how, and to whom they disclose information online, it may be used or interpreted in ways they never intended. Help them understand the public and permanent nature of the Internet so they can begin to build a positive digital presence.

Key Vocabulary

digital footprint: all of the information online about a person either posted by that person or others, intentionally or unintentionally

self-disclosure: sharing private, sensitive, or confidential information about oneself with others

persistent: lasting a long time, if not forever, such as information that one posts online that does not go away because it is passed on and spread

consequence: the effect of something that happened earlier

sexting: sending or receiving sexually explicit photos or videos by text message or other digital technologies

reputation: the general impression of a person held by others and the public

over-sharing: giving out too much information

"I wanted everybody to know what I'd done because I thought it was so cool... There were people that I didn't even know reading about it and commenting on it... It's just that when you're online, you think more like, you're not going to see these people again. So I wasn't worried that what I'd said was going to come back and really do damage. I pretty much broadcast it to the entire world."

Brittney, age 14