



# Private Today, Public Tomorrow

**Essential Question:** How can you respect the privacy of others online?

## Learning Overview and Objectives

*Overview:* Students reflect on their responsibility to protect the privacy of others when posting information about them online. Students read a true story about the unintended consequences of sharing a compromising photo, and then they consider how this situation might be different if someone else shared the photo. Next, students brainstorm questions they should ask themselves before posting and tagging photos, videos, or any information about others online, and create a decision tree to guide them through future choices.

### objectives

*Students will:*

- Consider the possible benefits and risks of sharing information online
- Recognize the importance of context in posting or viewing online images
- Understand what choices they need to make to protect the privacy of others online

## Materials and Preparation

### Materials

- **The Unintended Consequences of Sharing Student Handout**
- Back issues of news and celebrity magazines that students can cut up (for Extension Activity)

### Parent Resources

- Send parents the **Privacy and Digital Footprints Parent Tip Sheet**

**Estimated time:** 45 minutes

### Preparation

- Copy **The Unintended Consequences of Sharing Student Handout**, one for each student

## Differentiated Instruction

For ELL students, teachers should read aloud **The Unintended Consequences of Sharing Student Handout**.

## Key Vocabulary

- **Reputation:** The general impression of a person held by others and the public
- **Persist:** To continue and endure
- **Context:** Different factors that surround a piece of information that help determine its meaning
- **Tag:** To add a descriptive word, label, or phrase to a photo or video

## teaching plans

### Introduce (5 minutes)

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary terms **persist** and **reputation**.



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**ASK** *Why do you think things posted online tend to persist, even when you prefer they didn't?* (Students should understand that even if they “unpost” something, it can persist online because information can easily be reposted, copied, and passed around by others.)

**ASK** *What kinds of things might be good for your reputation in the future if they are posted online now? What kinds of things might be harmful?* Sample responses:

GOOD	HARMFUL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photos and videos of you doing activities for school and community</li> <li>• Positive comments about you from others</li> <li>• Cool things you created for school or for fun</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embarrassing or humiliating comments or photos</li> <li>• Hints of drug or alcohol use</li> <li>• References to illegal or bad behavior</li> <li>• Personal information that you shared in confidence with someone</li> <li>• Photos that were taken without your consent</li> </ul>

**TELL** students that they will explore a situation in which information posted online had unintended consequences and damaged someone’s reputation.

## Teach 1: A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words (15 minutes)

**INVITE** students to reflect on the saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words.”

**ASK** *What do you think this saying means?* (Students should consider that a complex idea can often be illustrated with a single image, and that context plays a role in how an image is interpreted.)

**ARRANGE** students in groups of four or five, and distribute the **Unintended Consequences of Sharing Student Handout**, one for each student.

**INSTRUCT** students to read the “Drunken Pirate” article, either silently or aloud (taking turns). Alternatively, assign the reading as the previous night’s homework. The purpose of the article – about a young teacher in training whose career is affected by a photograph on a social networking site – is to encourage students to understand how oversharing information online might affect their privacy, and to grasp the importance of context around sharing things online.

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary words **context** and **tag**. Explain that tagging can be done on many social networking sites without the permission of the person who is being tagged.

**INSTRUCT** students to discuss the following questions in their groups, with one group member writing down their responses.

**ASK** *Do you think Millersville University was justified in disqualifying Stacy from earning her teaching degree because of her profile page? Why, or why not?* (Encourage students to think about the question from different perspectives, such as that of Stacy, her friends, school officials, community members, or parents of Stacy’s students. Remind students that Stacy is an adult, and that for the purpose of this exercise, they should be less concerned about judging her behavior than about considering issues of online privacy.)



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**ASK** How would the situation be different if the context of the photo were taken into account? For instance: What if the caption of the photo was not “Drunken Pirate,” but “Happy Halloween” or “My friend forced me to wear this pirate hat”? What if a post accompanying the photo said that it had been taken at a child’s birthday party and Stacy was drinking punch? (Students should consider that the context – including where a photo is placed and how it is labeled – affects how others perceive it.)

**ASK** What if Stacy’s friend Joe had posted the picture of Stacy without her knowing it, and tagged her with the “Drunken Pirate” caption. Does the fact that Joe posted the picture change the situation? Why or why not? (Students should realize that in this case, even though Joe would be responsible for posting the picture without Stacy’s permission, Stacy might still have to face negative consequences.)

**ASK** Does Joe have a responsibility to ask Stacy before he posts (and tags) a picture of her? Do other people, including strangers who come across the photo online, have the responsibility to check with Stacy before they tag or repost the photo? Why, or why not? (Students may say that it depends on the picture, but they should clearly recognize that pictures or tags that have any chance of being harmful should never be posted without the consent of the person in the photo. If they aren’t sure, they should always ask.)

## Teach 2: Think Before You Post (10 minutes)

**KEEP** students in groups.

**ASK** Do you ever post things online about your friends? Do you comment on or tag their posts or photos? How do you decide what is okay? (Students might say that they try not to post mean, embarrassing, or private things about their friends.)

**ASK** What if your own judgment about a post is different from a friend’s? For example, imagine you’ve posted a photo of a group of friends. One friend immediately comments that she loves it, but another complains that he doesn’t like the way he looks, and asks that you to take it down. You think everyone in the photo looks great. What do you do? (Students may suggest talking to the friend who doesn’t like the photo, or choosing another photo of the group to post in its place.)

**INVITE** students to brainstorm a list of questions that someone should ask him- or herself before posting anything about another person. Have them write these questions on paper or on the backs of their student handouts.

Sample responses:


<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What am I posting, and where am I posting it?</li> <li>• Who might see what I post?</li> <li>• Might it be harmful, harmless, or something in between to the person?</li> <li>• Do I have permission to tag people?</li> <li>• Even if I don’t think something is harmful, is it possible that my friend will?</li> <li>• Do I know my friend’s feelings about what he (or she) would want posted?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would I feel comfortable if someone posted this about me?</li> <li>• What are the possible consequences of sharing this information about that person?</li> <li>• How might the information affect the person’s reputation?</li> <li>• Could the information be offensive to some members of the online community?</li> </ul>
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## Teach 3: Create a Decision Tree (10 minutes)

**CHALLENGE** students to work in the same groups to create decision trees based on their brainstorming of questions in Teach 2. They should develop a flow chart of decisions on a large sheet of paper.

 Alternatively, have students create a flow chart using tools on Microsoft Office (e.g., shapes and lines in MS Word and PowerPoint, or the flowchart tool in Excel) or by using the free online flowchart maker Gliffy ([www.gliffy.com](http://www.gliffy.com)). Allow for additional time. Students should start their decision tree with the first question they would ask themselves when deciding whether to post something, and then continue to additional steps or questions based on a “yes” or “no” answer. Below is an example of the first steps of a decision tree:

*Could what I am about to post be harmful or embarrassing to my friend(s) in this context?*

If Yes > Do not post it.

If No or Not Sure > Go on to the next question.

*Have I asked my friend(s) if it's okay with them to post something?*

If Yes > Go on to the next question.

If No > Go ask them if you can. If you can't ask them, go on to the next question but remember to ask them soon.

*Did your friend(s) say it was okay to post something about them?*

If Yes > Go on to the next question.

If No > Do not post.

**INVITE** students to display their decision trees and discuss how they share responsibility for protecting the privacy of their friends and anyone with whom they connect online.

## Wrap Up and Assess (5 minutes)

Use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives, or evaluate the quality of students' decision trees to assess their learning.

**ASK** *How can people's reputations be affected by what is posted about them online? What impact could this have on their future?* (Anything posted online could persist for years to come, and this might affect important parts of their future lives, such as attending schools or getting jobs. Remind students that they can help build each other's online reputations in a positive way, creating reputations that they like and are proud of.)

**ASK** *What should you ask yourself before you post a photo, video, or other information about another person online?* (Students should be able to identify questions from their decision tree.)

**ASK** *How can you take responsibility for protecting the privacy and reputation of others?* (Never post anything that might be harmful to someone else, and ask the person's permission before you post anything that might be private. Only post things that contribute to building a positive online reputation for someone – help them be proud of the things that are online about them.)



## Extension Activity

To reinforce the importance of context, have students look through news magazines and celebrity magazines to find a photo that might make either a negative impression or a positive/neutral impression based on how it is captioned. Have students cut out their photos, glue them to sheets of paper, and then write one of



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each type of caption on the back (negative vs. positive or neutral). Invite volunteers to hold up their photos and read both captions aloud to the class. Encourage other students to say whether they agree with the interpretations of the photo, and explain why or why not.



## Homework

Have students discuss the concept of reputation with a parent or other adult family member, and then have students conduct an interview with that person about a relevant experience in the adult's life. Provide students with the following suggested interview questions:

- Can you remember a time when something happened that made you embarrassed or angry because it affected your reputation? What happened?
- How did you respond? What did you do to try to protect or restore your reputation? Have students write up their interviews and share highlights with the class.

### Alignment with Standards – National Educational Technology Standards for Students® 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007)

#### 1. Creativity and Innovation

- a. apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes
- b. create original works as a means of personal or group expression
- c. use models and simulations to explore complex systems and issues

#### 2. Communication and Collaboration

- a. interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital environments and media
- d. contribute to project teams to produce original works or solve problems

#### 3. Research and Information Literacy

- a. plan strategies to guide inquiry

#### 4. Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making

- a. identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation
- b. plan and manage activities to develop a solution or complete a project
- d. use multiple processes and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions

#### 5. Digital Citizenship

- a. advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology
- b. exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity



## Unintended Consequences of Sharing

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### Directions

Read the following story and be prepared to discuss it in class.

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### College Sued Over “Drunken Pirate” Sanctions

Woman claims teaching degree denied because of single MySpace photo

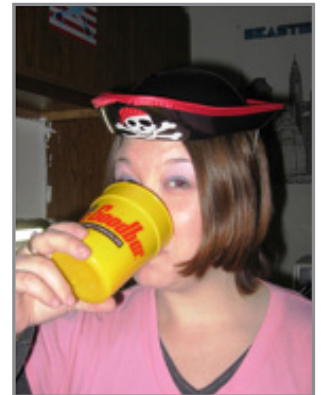
(<http://www.thesmokinggun.com/documents/crime/college-sued-over-drunken-pirate-sanctions>)

APRIL 26, 2007 — A Pennsylvania woman claims that her teaching career has been derailed by college administrators who unfairly disciplined her over a MySpace photo that shows her wearing a pirate hat and drinking from a plastic cup. In a federal lawsuit, Stacy Snyder charges that Millersville University brass accused her of promoting underage drinking after they discovered her MySpace photo, which was captioned “Drunken Pirate.” The picture from Snyder’s MySpace page (which she says was snapped at a costume party outside school hours) can be seen below.

In her complaint, Snyder, a 25-year-old single mother of two, says that Millersville officials discovered the image last May, while she was a senior working as a student-teacher at Conestoga Valley High School. A university official told her that the photo was “unprofessional” and could have offended her students if they accessed her MySpace page. At the time the “Drunken Pirate” photo was taken, Snyder was of legal age to drink, though her lawsuit notes that the photo “does not show the cup’s contents.” ...

Despite good grades and solid performance evaluations, Snyder claims that school officials improperly denied her a bachelor of science in education degree and a teaching certificate. The university, Snyder added, instead granted her a bachelor of arts degree last May 13. Because the school refuses to confirm that she satisfactorily completed her student teaching requirements, Snyder claims that she has been unable to secure certification from Pennsylvania’s Department of Education. Snyder’s lawyer, Mark Voigt, told TSG (TheSmokingGun.com) that his client now works as a nanny. He added that school officials should actually be “celebrating” Snyder, a mother of two young children who returned to school to get a teaching degree.

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## Lesson Assessment

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Before you post about someone else online, it's important to:**

- a) Ask that person if it's okay to post
- b) Consider if you will upset anyone by posting
- c) Think about who might see what you post
- d) All of the above

**2. Read the following online post by Elliot. Then underline three phrases that could negatively impact Elliot or his friend Brian's reputation.**

Thanks for all of the birthday wishes, everybody! It feels great to be 16.

This weekend was crazy. Brian and I went on a camping trip with my older bro and some of his college friends. Brian said he knew about an awesome trail that was closed off to hikers. A park ranger found us, but we just lied and said we were lost.

The best part about the weekend? Drinking beer with the boys at sunset. What a life.

Who wants to give Brian and me notes for the History test tomorrow? We didn't have time to study!

Peace,  
Elliot



## Lesson Assessment

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3. Look at the possible captions for this photo in the chart below. Circle the captions that make this photo okay to post, and mark an “X” over the captions that would make this photo inappropriate to post.



“Best  
concert  
ever!”

“We got so  
hammered  
this night!”

“Man, you can’t  
even tell we drank  
before the concert!”

“You guys  
look great in  
this photo!”





## Lesson Assessment

### 1. Before you post about someone else online, it's important to:

- a) Ask that person if it's okay to post
- b) Consider if you will upset anyone by posting
- c) Think about who might see what you post
- d) All of the above**

#### *Answer feedback*

The correct answer is **d**. Before you post anything online, make sure you think about who might see what you post and how that could affect the person you've posted about.

### 2. Read the following online post by Elliot. Then underline three phrases that could negatively impact Elliot or his friend Brian's reputation.

#### *Answer feedback*

There are more than three correct answers. Possible responses are listed below:

Thanks for all of the birthday wishes, everybody! It feels great to be 16.

This weekend was crazy. Brian and I went on a camping trip with my older bro and some of his college friends. Brian said he knew about an awesome trail that was **closed off** to hikers. A park ranger found us, but **we just lied** and said we were lost.

The best part about the weekend? **Drinking beer** with the boys at sunset. What a life.

Who wants to give Brian and me notes for the History test tomorrow? We **didn't have time to study!**

Peace,  
Elliot

Elliot makes references to trespassing, lying, underage drinking, and not doing homework. Not only are these things wrong to do, but that they could harm his reputation and Brian's as well. Elliot should remove these references from his post to keep his online image positive.



# Lesson Assessment

3. Look at the possible captions for this photo in the chart below. Circle the captions that make this photo okay to post, and mark an “X” over the captions that would make this photo inappropriate to post.



“Best concert ever!”

“We got so hammered this night!”

“Man, you can’t even tell we drank before the concert!”

“You guys look great in this photo!”

### Answer feedback

It’s important to remember that the context you provide when you post something online, like a caption or a comment, can make a difference in the way others see your post. Before you post something, think about how you are representing yourself and others. Ask yourself if your post could harm or embarrass you or anyone else.



# Common Sense on Privacy and Digital Footprints

## Some Facts

- 80 percent of teens ages 15 to 18 feel their friends share too much information online (Common Sense Media, 2010)
- 65 percent of teens ages 15 to 18 think their personal information is private online (Common Sense Media, 2010)
- Nearly 80 percent of teens who are on social networks protect their profile by using some type of privacy setting (Computer Associates, 2009)

## What's the Issue?

Our teens live in a culture of sharing that has forever changed the concept of privacy. In a world where everyone is connected and 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 or private information. Each time your teen fills out a profile without privacy controls, comments on something, posts a video, or sends a picture of themselves to friends, they potentially broadcast themselves to the world.

## Why It Matters

Digital life is both public and permanent. Everything our teens do online creates digital footprints that migrate and persist. Something that happens on the spur of the moment – a funny picture, an angry post – can resurface years later. And if teens aren't careful, their reputations can be harmed. Your teen may think he or she just sent something to a friend, but that friend can send it to a friend's friend, who can send it to their friends' friends, and so on. That's how secrets become headlines, and how false information spreads fast and furiously. The stakes only increase when we remember that all of this takes place in front of a huge, invisible audience. Teens' deepest secrets can be shared with thousands of people they've never even met.

### common sense says

- **Help teens think long term.** Explain to teens that everything leaves a digital footprint with information that can be searched and passed along to thousands of people. Others can pass on that information too, so if they don't want to see something tomorrow, they'd better not post it today.
- **Teach teens to keep personal information private.** Help teens define which information is important for them to keep private when they're online. To start, we recommend that teens not share their addresses, phone numbers, or birth dates.
- **Make sure your teens use privacy settings on their social network pages.** Encourage teens to think carefully about the nature of their relationships (close friends, family, acquaintances, strangers) and adjust their privacy settings accordingly.



# Common Sense on Privacy and Digital Footprints

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- **Remind teens to protect their friends' privacy.** Passing along a rumor or identifying someone in a picture (called “tagging”) affects other people’s privacy. If your teen is uncomfortable being tagged in friends’ photos, they can ask to have the photos or the tags removed. But beyond that, there’s not too much they can do. So teach your teen that it’s better to check with friends first before posting something about them.
- **Remind teens that the Golden Rule applies online.** While teens don’t always have control over what other people post of them, they can be proactive and help guide which snapshots of their lives are taken in the first place. What goes around comes around. If teens spread a rumor or talk badly about a teacher, they can’t assume that what they post will stay private. Whatever negative things they say can and probably will come back to haunt them, in more ways than they can imagine.

## Families Can Talk About It

- *Do you really want everyone to know that about you?*
- *Think about what parents of your friends might think of you if they saw that.*
- *How do you think that person would feel if he/she later saw it someday?*