

Responsibilities of Digital Citizenship

Have you ever counted all the methods of communication and knowledge distribution we have today? Through Internet, we have unending possibilities for social media in both short (Twitter, Facebook, instant messaging (IM), and online multiplayer games) and long forms of communication (e-mail, blogs, forums, personal websites, and news websites), as well as countless outlets for instant knowledge, information, and entertainment.

Consider the technology at our fingertips we can use to communicate or access this information, such as wireless Internet, cellphones, tablets, laptops, video game consoles, hand-held game consoles, e-readers, and apps.

We love technology! In our “instant” society, TV news anchors deliver information with open laptops they consult when their up-to-the-minute news has changed within the last few seconds. Perceptions are altered daily; for example, cell phones were banned initially as distractions in schools but, with numerous valuable apps, are now essential tools for research, collaboration, and learning. Our society has embraced technology and cannot function easily without it. To participate safely, we must gain an awareness of the elements of digital citizenship.

Nine elements of digital citizenship are as follows:

1. Everyone in society may use digital technology. No specific age, certification, location, intelligence, or license is required.
2. Everyone can buy and sell goods in the digital world. No one needs specific credentials to post an ad online.
3. Everyone can exchange information digitally. No expertise is required before offering an opinion.
4. Everyone has the capability to use digital technology. Knowing when and how to use it is another matter. Messages can be sent mistakenly by babies pounding a keyboard and by unsuspecting person leaning on a cell phone in a back pocket.
5. Digital technology users are expected to conform to a universal standard of conduct. Users unaware of these standards of conduct can experience costly lessons.
6. All digital technology users have privileges and freedoms that come with behavioral expectations. Everybody can expect to be treated as equal to others.
7. Digital technology users are to respect the physical and psychological well-being of others. Everyone is to treat others with respect.

8. Digital technology users are to know and respect legal rights and restrictions governing technology use. Licensing agreements and company protocols for use of its technology while employed are to be followed at all times.
9. Digital technology users are to take precautions to guarantee their personal safety and the security of their networks. Take care that digital technology in your care cannot be misused by others.

Digital Citizenship at Work

Often, people are unaware of their responsibilities as digital citizens in the workplace. Here are a few examples.

1. *Everyone in society may use digital technology.*

Workers are provided with company laptops and mobile devices so they can complete their work efficiently. Taking tutorials and courses to learn how to operate the technology is a responsible use of an employee's time.

Example:

John discovered that he had to be proficient in Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel in his new job. He received training to use both of these systems on the second day of his job.

However, the workplace may use only certain kinds of digital technology and may not support other options unless the needs of the organization are being met. Employees must use digital technology responsibly during working hours.

Example:

Casey shops for everything online, which only takes minutes! Ordering items on her iPad is so much more convenient than going to the store. But, should she be shopping online while at work?

When using technology at work, ensure that the screen is appropriately bright and that you are not straining any aspects of your body, such as your eyes and hands.

Example:

Ensure that your screen is appropriately bright, your keyboard is suitable for the size and placement of your hands, and chair arms are adjusted for support.

2. *Everyone can buy and sell goods in the digital world.*

Companies may participate in buying or selling goods online. The same level of trust and integrity is expected in digital transactions from the company and its employees as in face-to-face business. Responsibilities change with e-commerce but the premises of company-customer respect stay the same.

Example:

Darla noticed that while taking orders online for pizza at Pizza 73, she could see every customer's credit card information. She knew her responsibility was to keep this information private, just as she would if she were delivering a pizza to the customer's house where they paid with credit card in person.

3. *Everyone can exchange information digitally.*

Internet is a valuable resource for new ideas and online collaboration with others in your profession. Choose the media you use to exchange information with colleagues carefully. Media you use outside of work to communicate or share information with friends may not be acceptable in a work setting. Learn the difference to avoid embarrassment. Colleagues from different locations can work together on a project without travelling, using programs such as Google Docs or Skype. Personal use of these programs should be professional; you would not use these programs with your boss as you would with your friends. When sharing information at work, respect the privacy and personal information of co-workers, customers, and other work associates.

Example:

As a joke, Jordan Skyped his boss wearing a polo shirt appropriate for work and had his hands on a table in front of him. Little did his boss know that Jordan was still wearing his pajama pants and slippers under the table. This is not professional.

Example:

Donna posted information about a work-related issue on her personal blog and sent the link to all her colleagues. Now they have access to her personal blog. Donna made that decision because she always conducts herself responsibly when blogging. Would you be comfortable doing the same? Is giving colleagues access to your personal accounts necessarily appropriate?

4. *Everyone has the capability to use digital technology. Knowing when and how to use it is another matter.*

Sending a rare emergency text at work may be okay, but texting socially for several hours is not. To determine if using your phone for social media or other media at work might be okay, ask yourself this question: if you were the boss, would you approve?

Example:

Alexis was not feeling well so she Tweeted her boss: "@mdonald Sorry, I'm sick-- won't be in today." Alexis should have phoned her boss personally to say she was ill and would not be at work that day.

5. *Digital technology users are expected to conform to a universal standard of conduct.*

Many individuals believe that whatever they put on Facebook is their business.

However, employers use it to see how potential job candidates present themselves in a public area.

Example:

Patty presented herself well in an interview for a receptionist job. The boss researched her on *Google* before phoning to say she had the job and discovered a photo of her laughing with friends, holding a beer at a party. He did not hire her because he wanted employees who presented themselves respectfully in public. The party Patty attended may have been private, but choosing to post publically on Facebook showed bad judgement.

6. *All digital technology users have privileges and freedoms that come with behavioral expectations.*

At work, we're always expected to treat co-workers with respect. Harassing or saying nasty things about a peer on company e-mail, which is traceable, may have legal ramifications. Putting a video of the boss at a social event on You Tube may have similar results. Deciding factor: ask yourself, "Would I be happy if it were me?" Keep in mind the behavioural expectations you have at work; how do you present yourself respectfully online while at work?

7. *Digital technology users are to respect the physical and psychological well-being of others.*

Using technology to praise a colleague's helpful actions is usually appropriate because it promotes unity in the company. Using social media to send inappropriate jokes at a colleague's expense or to express dissatisfaction with administration is inappropriate. Such passive-aggressive behaviour usually divides workers and slows production in an uncomfortable work environment.

8. *Digital technology users are to know and respect legal rights and restrictions governing technology use.*

A responsible digital citizen in the workplace produces original work, respects copyright laws, and avoids plagiarism when developing material. Downloading content for personal use and visiting sites outside company firewalls is disrespectful.

Example:

Derrick has never learned the differences between iPhones and Android phones and must give a presentation about the qualities of each. Instead of putting together his own Power Point to present to his boss, he downloads one and attaches his name as author thinking, "He'll never know, right?" Plagiarism or related offenses at work can result in discipline or termination. While using the Internet for research is appropriate, claiming someone else's work as your own is never appropriate.

9. *Digital technology users are to take precautions to guarantee their personal safety and the security of their networks.*

A responsible digital citizen learns and respects company policy regarding security and monitoring. He or she avoids contact with unreliable sites or links that may contain computer viruses. Personal information, such as Social Insurance Number, home address, and age of workers, is kept confidential to protect their safety.

Example:

Pam gets an e-mail that promises she will win a large sum of money if she clicks the e-mail attachment. Clicking the attachment infects Pam's computer and the whole company network. The server must be taken down as a result. Pam's company loses \$2000 dollars in revenue each day the server is down because employees are unable to do their work.

Digital Citizenship at Play

People can become responsible digital citizens in their [leisure activities](#). Here are a few examples.

1. *Everyone in society may use digital technology.*

People can access the Internet through computers and mobile devices at home, in school, in public libraries, and in cyber cafes. Recognizing the need for connectivity, major cities now provide free Internet service to all citizens within their boundaries. That means you have unlimited access to chat rooms, Facebook, Twitter, blogging, multiplayer games, and multiplayer socialization. Remember that while using public Wi-Fi, whatever you choose to view or reply to online is open to the scrutiny of the Wi-Fi provider. Use discretion with what you choose to access online on open Wi-Fi networks. Just as too much of anything is unpleasant, too much screen time prevents you from experiencing other worthwhile enjoyments. Monitoring your screen time is important to ensure you have a balanced lifestyle.

2. *Everyone can buy and sell goods in the digital world.*

Participating in business deals online can save you time and energy, but beware of the person or company conducting business with you. Ensure online businesses have a safe structure for exchange of personal information. Be cautious when arranging the sale or exchange of goods with others online.

Example:

A person in Edmonton made plans to show a man the car he advertised on Kijiji. On the way to the large mall parking lot, the man phoned the owner, asking if he could meet several blocks away instead. When the owner arrived, the man and two accomplices locked him in the trunk and drove to another city. Fortunately, the owner escaped. In a similar incident in Calgary, the owner was physically assaulted and hospitalized. The lesson: always tell family where you are going, take a friend, and meet potential buyers in largely populated places (not your home). Never change the meeting place at the last minute. Reschedule another time and place to be on the safe side.

3. *Everyone can exchange information digitally.*

Meeting and chatting with many people online can be fun and exciting. Discussing common interests in a casual forum and discovering shared experiences can lead a person to speak openly. Remember that unless you met them, these "friends" are still strangers, whom you cannot identify in a police lineup. Give general details, such as "I live in Northern Alberta" or "in Edmonton" and do not provide specific personal information that they may use to arrive at your front door. When completing profiles online, be aware that most profiles are accessible to the public. What information is safe to post online?

4. *Everyone has the capability to use digital technology. Knowing when and how to use it is another matter.*

Sometimes, saying or posting outrageous things online may appear exciting, especially if you would never think of doing so face-to-face with friends. However, be aware that you have a digital trail that will follow you through life. Posting a risqué photo of yourself to a "friend" on Facebook may seem like a good idea now, but how would you feel if friends and family saw that photo on Internet?

Sometimes, in certain types of social media, you may retrieve or take down posts, but if something questionable is put up about you or others, it may stay there forever. A good rule of thumb, before posting or texting, is to ask yourself if you would be embarrassed if your parents and friends saw the piece. If the answer is yes, the content is questionable, DO NOT hit *Send*!

5. *Digital technology users are expected to conform to a universal standard of conduct.* Many individuals believe their friends are trustworthy – until they have a disagreement. Those who believe they were wronged often impulsively seek revenge by exposing all deep dark secrets to a large public audience. Such thoughtless action usually damages someone's reputation and ends the friendship. Public demonstration of bad judgement is forever traceable and rarely forgotten.

6. *All digital technology users have privileges and freedoms that come with behavioral expectations.* Beware of "dis-inhibition", which is saying and doing things online that you would never say or do face-to-face. Being in a digital world may make you feel invincible: you cannot see your "friends" or other users, and they cannot see you; perhaps you can pretend to be someone more confident and outrageous. Remember, "The pen is mightier than the sword". Update "pen" to "digital tools" and an image of blood and death arises: death to relationships, reputations, and future plans after a careless post goes viral. The deciding factor of whether to post something unusual or daring is your answer to this question: "Would I be happy if I saw that about me tomorrow or five years from now?"

7. *Digital technology users are to respect the physical and psychological well-being of others.* Using technology to tease, bully, or disclose sensitive personal information about an individual is an act of cowardice. What may seem a humorous prank to some can lead to a lifetime of agony or a loss of life.

8. *Digital technology users are to know and respect legal rights and restrictions governing technology use.* No one enjoys having personal possessions stolen. That extends to intellectual property, such as music, movies, art, and written work. If you made your living as a successful musician, you might be angry to learn that someone is making millions of dollars from your work while you receive nothing. That would be similar to having a stranger drive your vehicle whenever he or she wanted, without permission. A responsible digital citizen respects copyright laws and avoids plagiarism when developing material. Downloading content illegally shows great disrespect for artists we seemingly enjoy.

9. *Digital technology users are to take precautions to guarantee their personal safety and the security of their networks.* Communication in forums and on massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) can be fun and challenging. However, it or other similar services may tempt you to extend your character's risky behaviour by accepting invitations to meet online "friends" in person. Before agreeing to meet any person in reality, ask yourself what you know about the actual person behind the avatar. If you only know

limited details about “the character”, perhaps a trip to the movies or Disneyland would be safer.

Be careful about ads, pop-ups, or e-mail messages from people you do not know. As time evolves, viruses or “phishing” scams evolve, too. Never open e-mail from people you do not know, no matter how convincing the subject line may be. Do not click ads online that seem too good to be true. You can compromise the safety and privacy of information on your device, your financial information (be it phone or laptop), as well as contact information of any friends you have on your device.

Digital Citizenship in Life

The digital world is the fastest growing environment today. You are more fortunate than any other civilization to have an infinite amount of information, expertise, and resources at your fingertips whenever you need it. You are also more vulnerable to unknown and unseen dangers and predators than any other civilization. Take advantage of digital tools to ease your workload, but always apply critical thinking strategies to keep safe. Make your digital life enjoyable by practicing responsible digital citizenship every day!

Enjoy the benefits of digital tools!

Digital tools give you an unprecedented power over your present and future.

- Take free courses without having to change locations; you can arrange study hours within your daily schedule; you can register in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), a type of online class that depends on small group interactions for instruction.
- Contact world experts for specific information via online sites or even Twitter!
- Use tools to maintain a healthy well-being by visiting sites that address personal reflection, personal blogging, personal archiving (memories in media), practices to maintain hobbies or interests, and practices of streamlining personal demands for information, such as
 - Feeds: a data format used to provide users with frequently updated content by e-mail or on a personally customized feed site
 - RSS: (Rich Site Summary) a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works
 - Information collectors (curation tools), such as Pinterest or Symbaloo, online pin boards that allow users to create and manage theme-based image collections such as events, interests, and hobbies
- Have fun by making your own apps and games using digital technology that is accessible to everyone.

Protect yourself and those you contact.

- Be aware of information that is confidential and should never be shared online. Sharing application software (apps) that stores your personal information could lead to major personal and financial problems.
- Guard your Smartphone! For convenience, people store a great deal of personal information on Smartphones. If you lose yours, you also lose control of your privacy and all stored information. Sensitive information on your smart handsets can be easily stolen by thieves or malware developers, and you could be stuck with a monthly bill of \$500 or more rather than \$50.

- Ensure your digital safety by changing your usernames and passwords regularly. Use both numbers and letters that are not easily guessed, such as "iluvPJ100%". Keep your passwords in a safe place, preferably offline. Many people make the mistake of saving passwords in their e-mail where they can be retrieved by anyone savvy enough to break into an e-mail account.
- Take measures to prevent physical ailments that result from bad posture and other bad habits while using digital devices. Study ergonomic guidelines for appropriate digital equipment and gadgets, appropriate amount of "screen time" for eye health, and physical exercises to avoid carpal tunnel injury and tennis elbow sustained during computer use.
- Devise a plan for your digital presence after death. You may not realize just how digitally "imbedded" you already are, and in the event of tragedy, you likely want your family and your information protected. This might be a topic worth researching now!

In any event, make whatever you choose to do digitally work to your advantage. Have fun and be safe!

Reference:

ISTE Publication, Learning and Leading with Technology Magazine, 2008-09, Vol. 36, No. 4 - Passport to Digital Citizenship.