Follow the Digital Trail

Essential Question

What information is appropriate in a digital footprint?

Lesson Overview

Students learn that the information they put online leaves a digital footprint or “trail.” This trail can be big or small, helpful or hurtful, depending on how they manage it.

Students follow the digital information trails of two fictional animals. They make observations about the size and content of each trail, and connect these observations by thinking critically about what kinds of information they want to leave behind.

Estimated time: 45 minutes

Standards Alignment –

Common Core:

grade K: RL.1, RL.3, RL.4, RL.10, RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4, W.2, W.5, W.7, W.8, W.10, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.2, SL.3, SL.4, SL.6, L.6

grade 1: RL.1, RL.3, RL.4, RI.1, RI.4, RI.10, RF.4a, W.5, W.7, W.8, L.6

grade 2: RL.1, RL.3, RL.4, RL.10, RF.4a, W.2, W.5, W.7, W.8, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.3, SL.6, L.6

NETS-S: 1a, 1d, 2d, 3d, 4a-c

Key Vocabulary –

trail: a path or track
digital footprint: the information about you on the Internet
permanent: there forever

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to ...

• learn that the information they put online leaves a digital footprint or “trail.”
• explore what information is appropriate to be put online.
• judge the nature of different types of digital footprints by following the information trails of two fictional animals.

Materials and Preparation

• Cut apart the Digital Trail Squares (found at the end of the lesson plan), keeping the elephant and mouse squares separate. Be prepared to lay out each animal’s “tracks” in different locations in the classroom after the lesson introduction.

* Copy the Animal Tracks Student Handout, one for each group of four.

Family Resources

• Send home the Privacy and Digital Footprints Family Tip Sheet (Elementary School).
introduction

Warm-up (5 minutes)

SHARE with students that you can place information online much like you pin something to a bulletin board.

ASK:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What kinds of things are on the bulletin board or walls in our classroom?</th>
<th>Sample responses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student work</td>
<td>• Student work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photos of students</td>
<td>• Photos of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthday chart</td>
<td>• Birthday chart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INVITE students to imagine that all of the information on the walls of their classroom was pinned up on a bulletin board at a local grocery store.

ASK:

| Would you be comfortable with this information being up for everyone to see? | Guide students to think about how some information is better kept for only their eyes or the eyes of people close to them. |

EXPLAIN that there is certain information that might be fine to show anyone. But there is also personal and private information, such as their addresses, birth dates, and photos of their family vacations, which is not meant for most people’s eyes.

teach 1

Follow the Digital Trail (15 minutes)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term trail.

PLACE the Digital Trail Squares on the ground, face down, in two different trails, keeping Mizzle the Mouse and Electra the Elephant’s trails separate from one another.

SHARE the stories of Mizzle and Electra. These animals decided it would be fun to put some information about themselves online. They went onto www.wildkingdom.com and posted information. The only problem is that they forgot to ask their mamas if it was okay first.

EXPLAIN to students that they are from the “Things Big and Small” Detective Agency. An evil human has hired them to find out as much as possible about Mizzle the Mouse and Electra the Elephant. The more the detectives learn, the better for their plan to take over the animal kingdom.

DIVIDE students into groups of four. Tell them that each group should have a detective that will keep detailed notes.

DISTRIBUTE the Animal Tracks Student Handout to each group.

INVITE students to go on a hunt for information. Let them know that the information that Mizzle and Electra post can be seen by anyone, including the detectives. Each group should follow the digital trail of both animals, starting with the mouse and then the elephant. Stagger the groups so they are on the trail at slightly different times. Students should fill out their handout as they go.
teach 2

Digital Footprints (20 minutes)

INVITE each group to report to the rest of the class what they learned about each of the animals, using the Animal Tracks Student Handout.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mizzle the Mouse</th>
<th>Electra the Elephant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Whose full name do you know?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Whose house could you find?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Whose birth date do you know?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Whose user name and password do you know?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Who let out a secret on the Internet?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Which animal can you describe better from his or her photo?</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms digital footprint and permanent.

ASK:

Who can the detectives find out more about, and why?

Electra, because we now know where Electra lives, what she looks like, and private and personal information about her life. Point out to students that having a bigger digital footprint means the detectives can learn more about them too.

Which animal has a bigger digital footprint?

Electra, because she put more private and personal information online than Mizzle.

Mizzle says some funny things about himself on the Internet. What are they?

He says he likes Swiss cheese, his photo is of cheese, and he has a pet flea.

Is there anything that Electra posted on the Internet that could become a problem for her? If so, what and why?

Private and personal information (e.g., address, full name) allows others to learn more about her. This could be unsafe. Saying that she fights with her brother could hurt her brother’s feelings because it is public.

CREATE a chart with students that summarizes which information is appropriate or inappropriate to put online. Here is a sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
<td></td>
<td>Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First name</td>
<td></td>
<td>Information that would hurt others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSS how Mizzle and Electra both had very interesting information online, but Mizzle used better judgment about what was most appropriate to post. Mizzle had a smaller digital footprint. Electra put some information online that might make her unsafe or might upset her brother.

REMIND students that the Internet is a public space where people they do not know will likely see their information. And this information is very hard to remove. It is basically permanent.

Wrap-up (5 minutes)
You can use these questions to assess your students’ understanding of the lesson objectives.

ASK:

What is a digital footprint, and what did Mizzle and Electra’s footprints look like?
A digital footprint is the information about you on the Internet. Mizzle’s footprint is pretty small and does not reveal private or personal information. Electra’s is large and contains information that could make her unsafe or upset others.

What kinds of information are appropriate to put on the Internet? What kinds of information are inappropriate to put on the Internet?
Appropriate: interests, hobbies, first name; Inappropriate: full name, address, hurtful information about others.

Can you put interesting and funny information online and still be appropriate?
Absolutely. Just look at the information that Mizzle posted.

Extension Activity
Students modify Electra’s trail. Ask students to make a new trail for Electra that contains information that is safer and more appropriate. In small groups, encourage students to think critically about how they might change the information in Electra’s “animal tracks.” They should write down these alternative pieces of information for each footprint. Have students report on the information they created and how they made their decisions.

At-Home Activity
Students recount the story of Mizzle and Electra to their parents. They share why Mizzle put appropriate information online and why Electra put inappropriate information. They then share with their parents two things that are okay to reveal on the Internet and two things that are not okay.