

Digital Footprint: Think Before You Post

40 minutes

Cyber Safety

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Discover what a digital footprint is and how your online actions create active and passive traces that can last. Learn why it affects your safety, future, and relationships. Through interactive activities, practise pausing to think before posting, ensuring your online presence stays positive and secure.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Understand the concept of a digital footprint and its lasting impact online.
- Differentiate between active and passive digital footprints.
- Recognise how online activities contribute to one's digital footprint.
- Appreciate the importance of managing a digital footprint for privacy, safety, and reputation.
- Develop the habit of pausing to reflect before posting content online.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Open and test the Post or Don't Post interactive at step 6 on a device beforehand, and make sure sound and the display work if you plan to show any part on the board.
- Decide whether pupils work through the interactive on their own device or in pairs, and check devices are logged in and ready.
- Have the three pause questions from step 5 ready to display, so pupils can refer to them during the activity.

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

Introduction

Types of Digital Footprint

Your Digital Footprint is Permanent

Why Your Digital Footprint Matters

Think Before You Post

Activity

Review and Reflect

TEACHING MOVES

- 1. Introduction. Use the sand footprint image before moving on. Ask pupils to name one thing they did online today and decide together whether it left a clue. Keep it light before the term is defined.
- 2. Types of Digital Footprint. Draw the active versus passive line clearly on the board. Active is a choice they make, passive happens in the background. Ask for one example of each from the class.
- 3. Your Digital Footprint is Permanent. Stress that delete does not always mean gone, because a post can be screenshotted or copied first. Ask what happens once someone else has a copy.
- 4. Why Your Digital Footprint Matters. Connect the three areas, safety, future and friendships, to the apps and group chats pupils actually use. Ask why posting a training time or location could be a safety issue.
- 5. Think Before You Post. Frame the five second pause as their advantage over speed. Read the three questions aloud and tell pupils they will use these exact questions in the activity.
- 6. Activity. Set pupils to answer all five Post or Don't Post scenarios. Circulate and ask a few to justify their choice out loud, especially any they got wrong at first.
- 7. Review and Reflect. Run the review as a quick spoken recap. Ask pupils to say the two types of footprint and one reason it matters. Keep answers verbal.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Pupils believe that pressing delete removes a post everywhere for good. Return to step 3. Explain that someone may already have screenshotted or shared it, so delete only removes your copy, not every copy.
- Pupils think a footprint only means things they deliberately posted, missing passive tracking. Revisit the active versus passive split. Point out that visiting sites and using apps can leave a trail even when they post nothing.
- Pupils see small actions like a like or comment as harmless and not part of their footprint. Use the step 1 examples. Show that likes, comments and posts all leave a record, so a quick reaction still counts.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: Pair the pupil with a partner for the Post or Don't Post activity so they can talk each scenario through before choosing.
- Developing: Ask the pupil to say aloud which of the three pause questions helped them decide on a scenario, building the habit of reasoning it out.
- Proficient: Have the pupil invent a sixth Post or Don't Post scenario and explain to a partner why it is or is not safe to share.