

Public Social Media Presence: Opportunities and Risks

60 minutes

Strand 2.2: Engaging with the Workplace

Reflecting

Outcome LCW.M2.S2.ENG.5

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Examine how public social media profiles offer networking benefits but also carry risks when reviewed by potential employers. Assess a realistic sample footprint for opportunities and concerns. Complete an honest personal audit and outline curation plans for the future.

HANDLE WITH CARE

- If online conflict, image-based abuse, or distress surfaces, follow school procedures and signpost the guidance counsellor. Do not unpack peer conflicts as open class material.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
LCW.M2.S2.ENG.5	discuss the opportunities and challenges that a public social media presence may have on prospective employment.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Weigh networking benefits against employer-review risks of public social media
- Audit your own public presence honestly
- Plan active curation going forward

KEY TERMS

Term	What it means here	For example
Digital footprint	The trail of information about you that exists online: posts, photos, comments, tags, and profiles that others can find.	A tagged photo from a match, a public comment on a club page, or an old post that still appears in search
Public profile	An account or page set so that people who do not follow you can still see some or all of your content.	A sports highlight reel, a public volunteering update, or a joke post left on a public account
Networking	Using contacts and visibility to learn about opportunities, show your interests, and open doors in education, community, or work.	Following a local employer's careers updates, or sharing a short note about a project you completed

BEFORE THE BELL

- Prepare printed copies of the sample footprint if students will annotate on paper rather than digitally.
- Ensure the Social Media Audit template (or blank document named Social Media Audit) is accessible in Strand 2.2 folders without requiring account logins.
- Do not project or request live personal accounts.
- This step works best at a good pace, because the thinking students need to do here is quick and instinctive rather than considered. Let them commit to a position on their own first, and then sample two of the three statements for a short class share, so that everyone has staked something before they hear anyone else.
- On screen this lesson: opinion line, document annotator.

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

5 min	introduction	Getting Started
10 min	activity	What Do You Already Believe?
12 min	activity	Mark Up a Sample Footprint
25 min	activity	Case Study to Your Own Audit
8 min	summary	What you covered

STEP BY STEP

5 min Getting Started

Privacy comes first in this lesson, so do not ask students to open their own live accounts on the board: a public feed put up in front of the room can expose a student to comment they did not agree to. Keep the discussion on the invented sample footprint later in the lesson and on general categories of content instead, which lets everyone speak freely without anyone having to put their own posts on show.

If a student raises upsetting content or peer conflict linked to online posts, follow the school's own pastoral procedures rather than handling it as open class material, and signpost the guidance counsellor if that seems needed.

10 min What Do You Already Believe? On screen: opinion line

WHILE THEY WORK

Listen out for three things in particular as you move around the room. Some students treat a private account as total invisibility, forgetting screenshots and friends of friends. Some see only risk and miss the networking uses of a public profile altogether. And some will claim that deleting a post erases it forever.

Reveal the explanations after the class has spoken rather than before, because once the screen has given an answer the students who were unsure will stop arguing their own case.

12 min Mark Up a Sample Footprint On screen: document annotator

HOW TO RUN IT

Two minutes silent read, then annotate. Pause before the model reveal and ask: *Which line would you keep if this were your footprint, and which would you change first?*

TEACHING TIP

Push the class past "funny versus serious". The deeper cut is whether a stranger could check the claim, and whether the post helps a real application.

25 min Case Study to Your Own Audit On screen: document annotator

SUGGESTED TIMING

Allow about 8 minutes for the email annotate and the short discussion of the three think-about prompts, and leave roughly 14 to 16 minutes clear for writing the Social Media Audit, since that written piece is what the student takes away. If the period is cut short, the least a student should leave with is one findable item, one change and one curation action with a month attached to it, and the rest can be finished as homework the same week.

RUN ORDER

- First, a silent read of the case in the student copy, then the annotate of the supervisor email.
- Then a brief whole-class share on risk against opportunity. The three think-about prompts are for talk, so there is no need to collect written answers to them.
- Finally, students write only in **Social Media Audit** in the Strand 2.2 folder.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Students with almost no public presence still write the audit: say what is public, what is locked, and what they will keep that way.
- Students who share devices: write from known public items only; no pressure to log in.
- Support: sentence starters such as "An employer would find...", "I would change... because...", "This month I will..."

Collect that the document exists and names at least one concrete curation action with a time window. Keep privacy first here too, with no live accounts on the board.

8 min What you covered

As an exit check, look that every student has a Social Media Audit document with all three headings started. If time ran short, the least a student should leave with is one findable item, one change and one curation action with a month attached to it, with the rest finished as homework the same week.

ANSWERS AND LOOK-FORS

- Document annotator: "marshalling at a local under-14s blitz last spring" - Networking opportunity - Specific, checkable community contribution. A reader can picture the role and the setting.
- Document annotator: "weekend mode forever and tags four people" - Mixed signal - Not automatically disastrous, but public party imagery plus a throwaway caption is easy for a stranger to over-read.
- Document annotator: "set up the scoreboard software for the school sports day" - Networking opportunity - Shows a transferable skill with a real audience. This is the kind of public post that can support networking.
- Document annotator: "the manager had it coming and used a swearing emoji" - Employer risk - Public comment about a local business, hostile tone. An employer may wonder how Jamie speaks about people when annoyed.
- Document annotator: "volunteer steward for a community 5K next month" - Networking opportunity - Forward-looking commitment. It signals reliability and community involvement without boasting.
- Document annotator: "joking about copying homework before a deadline" - Curate or remove - Old joke, still public, still tagged. Harmless to friends; unhelpful to a stranger judging trust.
- Document annotator: "light look at publicly available social media" - Mixed signal - The workplace is clear that only public content is in scope, and the reason given is safeguarding and professionalism. Fairness still depends on how lightly and consistently that look is done.
- Document annotator: "calling in sick for the laugh might be worth taking down before Monday" - Curate or remove - Treated as a fixable risk: old public joke about reliability, easy for a supervisor to over-read before day one.
- Document annotator: "stewarding photos from the 5K are a strong signal" - Networking opportunity - Public volunteering evidence read as a positive professional signal. Same footprint, two very different readings.
- Document annotator: "Nothing alarming in your case" - Networking opportunity - Overall tone is welcoming. The email is coaching, not rejecting, which is useful context when you set your own curation rule.

TEACHING MOVES

- Keep the belief activity brisk with individual responses followed by a short class share of two statements.
- After silent reading of Jamie's sample, prompt whole-class discussion on which lines to keep or change.
- For Aoife's email, treat analysis prompts as talk-only; the only collected artefact is the Social Media Audit.
- Circulate during the personal audit to encourage specific rather than general entries.
- Model identifying both positive networking signals and potential risks in the same content.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Students viewing private accounts as completely invisible: explain that tags and public searches can still create a footprint.
- Treating all content as either good or bad: highlight how posts can contain mixed signals requiring curation decisions.
- Writing vague audit plans: require at least one specific example for each of the three headings.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: offer sentence starters for the audit sections such as “An employer would find...”.
- Extension: challenge students to suggest one additional curation action beyond the required month.
- Support: allow paired discussion for the case analysis before independent writing.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE LEFT WITH

- Social Media Audit: what an employer would find, changes, curation plan