

# Reputation



## LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students will consider how publicly available online information helps form others' opinions about them. They will identify audiences for different types of online communication, consider what information they want to appear when someone searches for their name and learn various ways to respond to internet content about them they do not like.



### ▶ ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- ▶ Based on information about you online, how can you shape the ways other people perceive you?



### ▶ AGE

- ▶ 13-18



### ▶ MATERIALS

- ▶ "What should you do?" Handout
- ▶ "What should you do?" Handout - Educator's Copy



### ▶ PREPARATION

- ▶ Print one handout per student
- ▶ Students will need internet access for this lesson



### ▶ ISTE DIGITAL COMPETENCY

- ▶ INCLUSIVE: I am open to hearing and respectfully recognizing multiple viewpoints and I engage with others online with respect and empathy.



## SUPPORT MATERIALS

Visit [facebook.com/fbgetdigital](https://facebook.com/fbgetdigital) to access resources for parents and young people that can complement the lesson students took on Wellness today.

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# Who knows your secrets?

## Part 1

### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

What is a secret you have about yourself? Keep this secret in your mind. You won't have to share this secret with anyone or write it down.

Now answer these questions in your own mind—don't speak your answers out loud or write them down:

1. How many people in this room know the secret?
2. How many people in your neighborhood know the secret?
3. How many people that you have never met face-to-face know the secret?

Imagine that you had to write down that secret on a piece of paper and one random person in this group was to read it. Here are some more questions—again, answer them only in your mind, not out loud or in writing. After one week goes by:

1. How many people in this room would now know the secret?
2. How many people in your neighborhood would now know the secret?
3. How many people that you have never met face-to-face would now know the secret?

## Part 2

### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

You need to think of people who are likely to see a secret or other piece of information about you as “the audience” for that information.

Having a better sense of the audience may help you more easily determine the information you feel comfortable sharing and what to not share with others. An audience is made up of a person or a group of people that can access a particular piece of information.

With new technologies today, audiences can grow very quickly. Because of this potential for rapid audience growth, it's difficult—if not impossible—for you to know or limit the audience for your online information and activities. While it's great that audiences can grow quickly when you want to share your work with a lot of people, it's not great when this happens with information that you want to keep private.

Unfortunately, private information—especially embarrassing information—is often exciting to people when they see it, so once this type of information is out there online, it can be very challenging to control who sees this content.

Whenever you share information online (even just directly with one person, like in a text or private message), you should be prepared for the possibility that it may spread well beyond the audience you intended to reach.

## Part 3

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS

- ▶ When you post a status update, photo or other information on social media, who is your intended audience?
- ▶ Does it depend on the social media platform? Or the context?

### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

It depends on your privacy settings as well as the social media platform you choose, but your audience could include just your closest friends/followers/connections or be broad enough to include anyone who uses that social media platform or anyone who searches for you online. But no matter who the audience is, information can be copied and posted somewhere else, someone can take a photo/screenshot of the content or information can be shared through in-person and online conversations.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS

- ▶ Who is your intended audience when you add content on social media?
- ▶ Who is your intended audience when, for example, you post on someone else's Facebook timeline or when you add content to another person's social media account (e.g., by commenting on one of their photos, tagging them in a post or photo)?

### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

This will depend on both your and their privacy settings, but often the content will be visible to their friends/followers/connections, which will include people you don't know—this might include their family members or administrators or teachers at their school.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS

- ▶ When you send a message (e.g., text, email, private/direct message on social media), who is your intended audience?

### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

Your audience is the person you're sending it to, but be careful—others might see it as well.

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS

- ▶ How can your message reach people other than the person you sent it to?
  - ▶ Possible ways include through photos/screenshots, forwarding and in-person phone sharing.
- ▶ In which cases might reaching a larger audience be useful?

- ▶ Possible examples include hoping to spread a message to a large audience, mobilizing people, raising awareness.
- ▶ In which cases could reaching a bigger audience than intended be problematic?
  - ▶ Sharing beyond the intended audience can get you in trouble, cause embarrassment, reputational harms.
- ▶ What are some situations where maintaining a good online reputation might be important?
  - ▶ Possible examples include school/college/university applications, job applications and making new friends.

## Researching your reputation

### Part 1

#### CLASS INTERACTION

Teacher chooses a public figure (e.g., someone in the music and/or film (movies/TV) industry, political figure, business leader) who will be familiar to the students. Google/look up their name on an online search engine and, with students, examine a few of the items that come up (please project search results on a screen). Also, explore the public figure's social media presence. After spending a few minutes exploring, ask two students to act out a hypothetical interaction between the public figure and a fan.

#### ASK YOUR STUDENTS

- ▶ How does it feel encountering someone who knows a lot of information about them?
- ▶ How would they feel if that information was incorrect?
- ▶ How many people can access this information?
- ▶ How can they control what information about them is available online?

### Part 2

#### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

People you meet will use search engines to obtain more information about you. What they find, good or bad, is going to impact what they think about you. If you want to be able to have control over how they perceive you, it is important for you to know what information they are likely to see.

These people include future employers and school/college/university admissions officers. Admissions officers may not inform applicants whether or not they looked them up online and/or used the information they find online to help make admissions decisions.

### Part 3

#### CLASS INTERACTION

Organize students into pairs.

#### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

Brainstorm three things you would want to come up when someone Googles your name/searches for your name online. How likely do you think it is that these things will actually appear in the search results?

Share with your partner.

#### ASK YOUR STUDENTS

- ▶ What did you and your partner come up with?
- ▶ Raise your hand if you have Googled your own name/searched for your name online. What did you see? What photos come up? Were you able to find information about yourself or are there other people in the world who share your name?
  - ▶ If they have a common name, ask students to add a piece of information to their searches, such as their hometown or their school name.

You can also ask students to Google themselves/search for their name online during this activity if computers or mobile devices with internet access are available.

#### ASK YOUR STUDENTS

When you Google your name/search for your name online, ask these three questions:

- ▶ What are the first few results?
- ▶ Are you comfortable with this information?
- ▶ What do the other results suggest about who you are as a person? As a student? As an employee?

What impression might someone who doesn't know you develop upon seeing these results? What impression might they have if they clicked and read the information contained in the first few results?

# Responding to complex information

## CLASS INTERACTION

Pass out the “What should you do?” Handout. Organize students into pairs. Ask students to discuss the scenarios on the worksheet and come up with two strategies/solutions for each scenario and think about the potential consequences of their actions. Give them 15 minutes to do this.

## ASK YOUR STUDENTS

- ▶ What should you do when someone posts content about you that you don't like and/or find inappropriate in that context?
- ▶ What should you think about before posting content about someone else?

# Responding to negative information

## Part 1

### ASK YOUR STUDENTS

- ▶ If you find negative information about yourself when you search for your name online (e.g., through a search engine or on social media), can you do something about it?
- ▶ What are some examples of content you might not want others to see?

## Part 2

### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

There are different approaches as to what can be done if you encounter online content about yourself that you don't like, depending on the context and the type of information, among other factors.

One approach is “counter-speech”, which means to draw attention/give more visibility to positive stories about yourself by creating and managing content that reflects you in a positive light. You can do this, for example, by creating a social media presence when appropriate, starting a blog or registering a website based on your name.

A second approach includes different measures to have negative content removed. For instance:

1. If you see content you do not like (e.g., a photo of you), you can try to reach out directly to the individual who posted it (particularly on social media and/or messaging apps) to ask them to remove the content.
2. Many platforms also provide interfaces to flag information that you feel is annoying or not interesting; content (e.g., photos, videos, text-based posts) that shows you in a negative/unflattering light; shouldn't be on the platform (e.g., seems offensive, violent or prohibited); appears to be a scam—and the platform then checks it against its terms of service and community norms.
3. In some cases, you might have legal remedies and can, for instance, file a lawsuit in a court of law, depending on jurisdiction and applicable law (for example in some cases of invasion of privacy or false statements that damage someone's reputation).
4. Some countries have specific laws that require platforms to take down certain types of unlawful content upon notification (e.g., Network Enforcement Act in Germany).
5. Please also note that sometimes attempting to suppress/remove/correct content might inadvertently draw greater attention to it.

## Part 3

### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

Additionally, people living in the European Union (“EU”) have a legal “right to erasure,” more commonly known as a “right to be forgotten” (this right still applies even when they are traveling or living outside of the EU). Under this right in the General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”), people in the EU can ask “data controllers” to delete certain types of information about them. (“Data controllers” are businesses, people, government agencies and others who make decisions about how information about you is processed.)

There are six reasons that people in the EU can ask for information about themselves to be erased. Each of these reasons covers a range of circumstances. For example, one of the reasons that a data removal request can be made is that the information was collected about a “child” who later decides that the risks of sharing this information are too great. That reason is very general. There are probably countless reasons that a twenty-five-year-old might decide they want to remove information they shared when they were sixteen!

There are also important limits on the right to erasure. There are five reasons why a request for erasure will be denied. Just as with the reasons for requesting erasure, the reasons for denial are broad, covering many types of situations. We'll talk more about one important reason for denial—to protect free speech rights—in a few minutes.

The GDPR went into effect on May 25, 2018. The more time that goes by with the GDPR in effect, the more we will learn about how people in the EU are using their right to erasure and how companies, government agencies and others are responding.

## Assignment

### ASSIGNMENT

Option 1, for students ages 13-15:

#### TELL YOUR STUDENTS

Now that we have talked about how publicly available online information helps form opinions about other people, let's apply what you've just learned.

Over the next 30 minutes, individually, engage in the following activity:

1. Choose a public figure (e.g., someone in the music and/or film (movies/TV) industry, political figure, business leader).
2. Search for publicly available information about that person online and explain, in a short paragraph, how this information has helped you form an opinion about this person.
3. If you could provide this individual with four recommendations around how content about them could be available online differently (e.g., in terms of a change in privacy settings, a change in audience, a change in the substance of the content) and/or not be available at all (e.g., deleted, have taken down) to improve how this person presents themselves /is perceived by others online, what would they be?

Give students 30 minutes to finish the assignment.

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# What should you do?

Please write your response to each question in the space provided. Keep in mind there are no wrong answers. Please think carefully about the questions and share your own opinion.

## SCENARIO 1

Sofia and her best friend Joaquín just had a huge fight. Afterwards, Sofia shared a really mean post about Joaquín on social media. Later that night, Joaquín texts her and they forgive each other, but her post is still online.

▶ What could happen?

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▶ What should Sofia do? What should Joaquin do?

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▶ Can you think of a real-life example of this situation?

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### SCENARIO 2

David took photos of some of his friends acting silly and posted them on social media, with hashtags that could sound rude or mean, but were actually inside jokes with his friends. The next day, Catalina, another friend, came up to him at school and said that she thought that the hashtags were really hurtful and kind of sexist (i.e., prejudice or discrimination based on sex; especially discrimination against women).

▶ What could happen?

▶ What should David do? What else could Catalina do?

▶ What if Catalina had confronted David online instead of in person?

▶ Can you think of a real-life example of this situation?

▶ What if Catalina started calling him a bully? How do you think being seen as a bully might affect David's reputation in the future?

### SCENARIO 3

Aditi was on social media when she discovered that Mary, a girl at school, had taken a photo of her and written, "Haha #whatnottowear" (making fun of her clothes). Of course, Aditi was really upset.

▶ What might happen?

▶ What should Mary do? What should Aditi do?



# What should you do?

EDUCATOR'S COPY

Please write your response to each question in the space provided. Keep in mind there are no wrong answers. Please think carefully about the questions and share your own opinion.

## SCENARIO 1

Sofia and her best friend Joaquín just had a huge fight. Afterwards, Sofia shared a really mean post about Joaquín on social media. Later that night, Joaquín texts her and they forgive each other, but her post is still online.

▶ What could happen?

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▶ What should Sofia do? What should Joaquin do?

▶ Some examples include: Someone could see the post and report Sofía for bullying or misinterpret her and Joaquín's relationship and feelings toward each other. Joaquin might still perceive the post to be rude. It is probably a good idea for Sofia to remove her post.

▶ Can you think of a real-life example of this situation?

▶ Students should reflect on examples they have encountered or heard of in the past. Keep in mind that sharing these real-life examples might be uncomfortable for students. Let them share examples of friends or people they know (vs. themselves).

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## SCENARIO 2

David took photos of some of his friends acting silly and posted them on social media, with hashtags that could sound rude or mean, but were actually inside jokes with his friends. The next day, Catalina, another friend, came up to him at school and said that she thought that the hashtags were really hurtful and kind of sexist (i.e., prejudice or discrimination based on sex; especially discrimination against women).

▶ **What could happen?**

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▶ **What should David do? What else could Catalina do?**

- ▶ David should apologize or explain himself. Students should consider how their actions may be perceived differently than they were intended, but that does not mean others' perceptions are invalid.

▶ **What if Catalina had confronted David online instead of in person?**

- ▶ If Catalina had confronted David on the public post, others would be able to weigh in on the issue and explain the inside joke or why the statement was offensive. It may be resolved or it may become a larger dispute among many other people. If Catalina contacted David via an online message, then David would be able to discuss it with her in the aftermath and edit his post if he was convinced it was inappropriate.

## SCENARIO 3

Aditi was on social media when she discovered that Mary, a girl at school, had taken a photo of her and written, "Haha #whatnottowear" (making fun of her clothes). Of course, Aditi was really upset.

▶ **What might happen?**

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▶ **What should Mary do? What should Aditi do?**

- ▶ Aditi should confront Mary about her actions to let her know that they were hurtful. Aditi can also report Mary's actions to the social media platform and an adult (e.g., parent/caregiver, teacher or school administrator).