

What's your digital footprint?

Teacher's guide and handouts

Introduction:

This lesson plan introduces students to the concepts of privacy and professionalism online. Students will search for their “digital footprint,” or publicly available information tied to them on the web, on popular social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Students discuss what it means to be professional and then change their privacy settings on their social networks to reflect their wishes.



Learning Objectives:

- Students are aware of what information about themselves is publicly available
- Students can name at least two ways to protect their personal information and identity on social networks
- Students know how to alter security settings on common social networks, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Students can describe characteristics that differ between a “professional” and “unprofessional” digital footprint for an entry level internship

Estimated Duration:

30-60 minutes (depends on length of discussion)

Ages:

13+ (may need to be adjusted for younger students) -- see important notes section below

Materials:

- Pencil or pen
- Worksheet (provided)
- Computers, tablets or smart phones
- Internet access to social media sites
- Ground Rules set by the class

Important Notes:

- Social media searches may bring up compromising information or images on some of your students that they may not wish to share with others.
- Anticipate that some students may find information they find upsetting when searching themselves, such as cyberbullying.
- Consider allowing students to opt out, or modifying the in-class activity to focus on a profile you have already vetted, such as yourself, a fake profile, a celebrity or colleague.

Scenario:

Tell the student he/she is about to apply for a position as a social media intern at a local radio station. Because of the Internet-savvy nature of the job, the student is fairly sure the station manager will do an online search for his or her name. The station manager has not asked for the student's social media accounts or passwords (even though employers [can in some states](#)), but she may still be able to find information on the student by doing a search of his or her name on a few common sites. The teacher will help the student conduct an online search of their digital footprint first to self-evaluate whether he or she is making a "professional" impression.

Directions for Activity (students and/or teacher):

1. Open a web browser and make sure you are signed out of your personal account on all social media sites (this will ensure that you have the same view as an employer who is trying to view your profile). For instructions on how to clear your Google search history, go [here](#).
2. Using the worksheet as a guide, go to the sites listed and do a search for yourself using your first and last name. You can also use commonly available information, like the city you live in or your school name, to narrow down the search. Examples for each site are shown below:

Google search*: *"Jane Doe"*
 "Jane Doe" San Francisco
 "Jane Doe" San Francisco Edison High

**NOTE: A Google search can also be used to find profiles on the other social media sites (see below). In fact, your search may bring up many of the profiles below.*

Facebook search: *People named "Jane Doe"*
 People named "Jane Doe" who live in San Francisco, California
 People named "Jane Doe" who go to Edison High

AND/OR search via Google:

"Jane Doe" Facebook

Twitter search: Fill in info at <https://twitter.com/search-advanced>

Instagram search: You can only easily search within the app using a smartphone:
Click the explore icon (looks like a compass) and enter name in search bar

“Jane Doe”

AND/OR on the computer, search via Google:

“Jane Doe” Instagram

LinkedIn search: Scroll down to bottom of page and fill in info for “Find a Colleague”

AND/OR search via Google:

“Jane Doe” LinkedIn

3. For each site, indicate whether or not you were able to find yourself. Fill in the worksheet with “yes” or “no” in the box marked “Searchable”
4. Look at the content of the site search and make notes in the worksheet about what you see. Look for content including achievements, hobbies, language (slang, formal language typos, swear words, offensive language), images, legality of activities, and personal information (address, phone number, location).
5. After the worksheet is filled out, consider what impression of you an employer might have based on what they can see about you online. This is your “digital footprint.” Describe your best guess as to a employer’s impression of you based on what you found.
6. Discuss your digital footprint with the class (*teachers: see Discussion section*)

7. As a class, go over how to change your privacy settings on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. to better reflect your desired digital footprint.

Changing settings in Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/help/325807937506242>

<http://personalweb.about.com/od/makefriendsonfacebook/a/faceprivsetting.htm>

Changing settings in Twitter

<https://support.twitter.com/articles/20169886-protecting-and-unprotecting-your-tweets>

Changing settings in Instagram

<http://help.instagram.com/116024195217477>

Changing settings in Google+

https://support.google.com/plus/topic/1672456?hl=en&ref_topic=1347964

Changing your Google search results

<http://mashable.com/2012/08/21/change-google-search-result/>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Ungoogle-Yourself>

Discussion Questions *(teacher notes)*

- What was your impression of your digital footprint? What surprised you?
(Example: This is a basic share out question, but be prepared that some students may be shocked or upset by information they found about themselves online. It may help to first inform them that there are ways to change privacy settings and other methods to alter their digital footprint.)
- What kinds of information would you want an employer to see about you online?
(Example: LinkedIn account where you can find accomplishments, awards, portfolio of professional work, contact info in case they want to get a hold of you, recommendations, etc.)
- What kinds of information would you not want an employer to see about you online?
(Example: Too-personal information like medical issues, activities that are controversial or illegal, nudity profanity or other non-work appropriate behavior, cyberbullying, harrassment, disrespectful remarks, complaints about work, etc.)
- *(Introduce the idea of [code switching](#))* How does the “version of you” that you share with friends online differ from the version you want employers to see? Teachers?
- How do these social network sites differ? What kind of information do you post on Facebook vs. Twitter vs. Instagram? What do you think the purpose is of LinkedIn?
(Example: There are no right/wrong answers here, and young people may report they don't use any of these sites, which is fine. They should know that LinkedIn is a professional site and people often use it for job hunting).
- If you wanted to change your digital footprint, how would you do go about doing that?
(Example responses: Using a different name for your social media accounts (doesn't always work because people can still ID you by computer, etc); only posting universally appropriate content; changing your privacy settings on social media accounts; contacting sites and ask them to take down information (they may say no) etc.)
- Do you think it is professional to have no digital footprint? Why or why not?
(Example: This is an open question, but it's good to think about why people create digital footprints like portfolios and LinkedIn accounts when they start searching for jobs.)
- How might different types of employers view “professionalism” differently? For example, if you wanted to be a musician vs. a lawyer?

What's your Digital Footprint?

Student Handout

Name of Student/Applicant: _____ Date: _____

Website	Searchable? (yes/no)	Notes (language, images, personal info, content, etc)
Google		
Facebook		
Twitter		
Instagram		
LinkedIn		
Other		

What do you think an employer's impression of you would be based on your digital footprint?