Level:	Grades 7 to 9
About the Author:	MediaSmarts
Duration:	2-3 hours

Promoting Ethical Behaviour Online – My Virtual Life

This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools: http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework*.*

Overview

In this lesson, students learn about ways to manage their privacy and reputation online by exploring their digital presence and to make good choices about sharing other people's content online. Students explore how they are portrayed online through their own content and content posted or shared by others, and research tools for controlling access to their online content. Finally, students explore moral dilemmas relating to posting and sharing personal material.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- an understanding of how their online activities reflect on them
- an understanding of the importance of ethical behaviour and reputation management in various online environments
- an understanding of the importance of managing one's privacy online
- consideration of ethical issues when sharing others' online content

Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the following handouts:

- *What's Your Opinion?*
- *My Online Portrait*
- *Who Sees What?*
- *Think Before You Share*
- *What Should I Do?*

Arrange Internet access for the *Who Sees What?* activity

Procedure

What's Your Opinion?

Begin by distributing the *What's Your Opinion?* handout. Have students take a few minutes to read through the statements and decide whether they agree or disagree. Then go through the statements with the class and have them share their opinions and the reasoning behind them. Make sure that each position gets heard in the discussion, but don't try to find a "right" or consensus answer for each question.

One thread in the quotes that is likely to emerge in the discussion is that students are concerned with how people see them online. Point out to students that when we're online, how we "look" to others is based on things we post and share – and things that are posted and shared about us – and that we may "look" different to different people based on how they interact with us online.

My Online Portrait, Part One

Distribute the handout *My Online Portrait* and ask students to fill out the left side: where do they post and share photos; videos; "likes", votes up or down, or "shares" of other people's content; comments or messages (anything in a text-only format); and other content that doesn't fit into any of the above categories such as artwork, games or game mods, online surveys, etc. Make sure students include both apps and websites (many platforms are both) and understand that the same platform may appear in more than one category: if they both post and "like" photos on Instagram, for example, Instagram would go in both the "Photos" and "Likes" category.

Who Sees What?

Have students create a tally of the platforms where they post and share the most content. Then have each student give their top three and do a tally for the whole class. Determine the top five or six platforms for the whole class and then divide the class into the same number of groups, assigning one of the top platforms to each group.

Distribute the *Who Sees What?* handout and have each group research the *privacy tools and settings* for their platform. (This can be done in class, if you have Internet access, or done as a group assignment outside of class time.)

My Online Portrait, Part Two

When students have completed and shared their *Who Sees What?* projects, point out that all of these privacy tools and settings have one limitation: they only control what *you* share and who *you* share it with. The people you choose to share it with can then do whatever they want with it and people can also post content about you or with you in it. (Even on platforms with "temporary" posts, like Snapchat, it's fairly easy to make a copy of a message or picture before it disappears.)

Now have students fill in the right side of the *My Online Portrait* handout: where other people post and share content about them, including photos or videos of them, "likes" and "shares" of their content, comments on their content, etc. (Remind students to think about more than just their friends – their parents, their schools and even the sites and apps they use may share content about them.)

Think Before You Share

Point out that since there are no tools for controlling what *other* people do with our content, we have to rely on other people to do the right thing. Explain that we rely on people's *ethics* and *values* to do the right thing: for example, most Canadian students believe it's right to get someone's permission before posting or sharing content with them in it; nine out of ten students think you should ask before posting a bad or embarrassing photo of someone; and more than half think you should ask before posting *any* photo. Students also have faith that their friends *will* do the right thing: eight out of ten say that if someone posts a photo of you that you don't want people to see, their first step would be to ask the poster to take it down – almost twice as many as the next-most-popular step (untagging the photo).

Distribute the handout *Think Before You Share* and go through it with the class. Point out that it's often hard to know what the right thing to do is because the *rules, social codes* and *moral principles* we use sometimes tell us different things.

Distribute the handout *What Should I Do?* and read the first scenario to the class, then lead a discussion that considers the points it raises. Don't feel the need to come to a consensus or conclusion; the students understand that there are different ways we can make a moral decision:

- how it will affect our relationships with others or the health of the group we're in (anything from a family to a country)
- whether or not it violates explicit rules of unspoken social codes
- whether or not it respects *moral principles* such as human rights or "thou shalt not kill"

Now have students read the second scenario independently and write their responses. Once students have had time to write their responses, have them discuss it and then work together to come up with ways of resolving the situation positively.

Finally, have students read the last scenario independently and answer the questions that follow it in a formal written format.

Extension Activity: Have students create a media product (skit, video, comic, etc.) that depicts a positive resolution to the scenario.

What's Your Opinion?

All of these quotes are from teens or young adults who were interviewed about their experiences with social networking and the Internet.

Read through these quotes and circle Y if you agree and N if you don't. Be ready to explain your opinion in class.

1. When I choose a picture, I want to make sure I look good in it.

    Do you agree?   Y   N

2. If one of my friends looks super good in a picture and I think I look mediocre then it's not the end of the world if I have one less than perfect picture of myself on Facebook.

    Do you agree?   Y   N

3. Some people don't ask before posting or tagging photos, but usually they're good about doing that because they don't want to embarrass their friends.

    Do you agree?   Y   N

4. I don't really get embarrassed by putting, like, pictures of me making a funny face or something but I would never put that as my profile picture.

    Do you agree?   Y   N

5. You look at a picture and you're like "Why won't people like this?" and then you look at it and you think "Yeah, my hair doesn't look that good," or "My clothes don't look that good," or "Wow, that outfit actually wasn't that nice." You start to look at everything and then you make yourself feel more negative about it.

    Do you agree?   Y   N

6. Sometimes it's really embarrassing, if you're making, like, the stupidest face in a picture and your friend posts it on Facebook, that's going to start some drama if they won't take it down or people have already seen it.

    Do you agree?   Y   N

My Online Portrait

WHERE I POST AND SHARE...

**WHERE THINGS ARE POSTED
AND SHARED ABOUT ME**

PHOTOS:

PHOTOS:
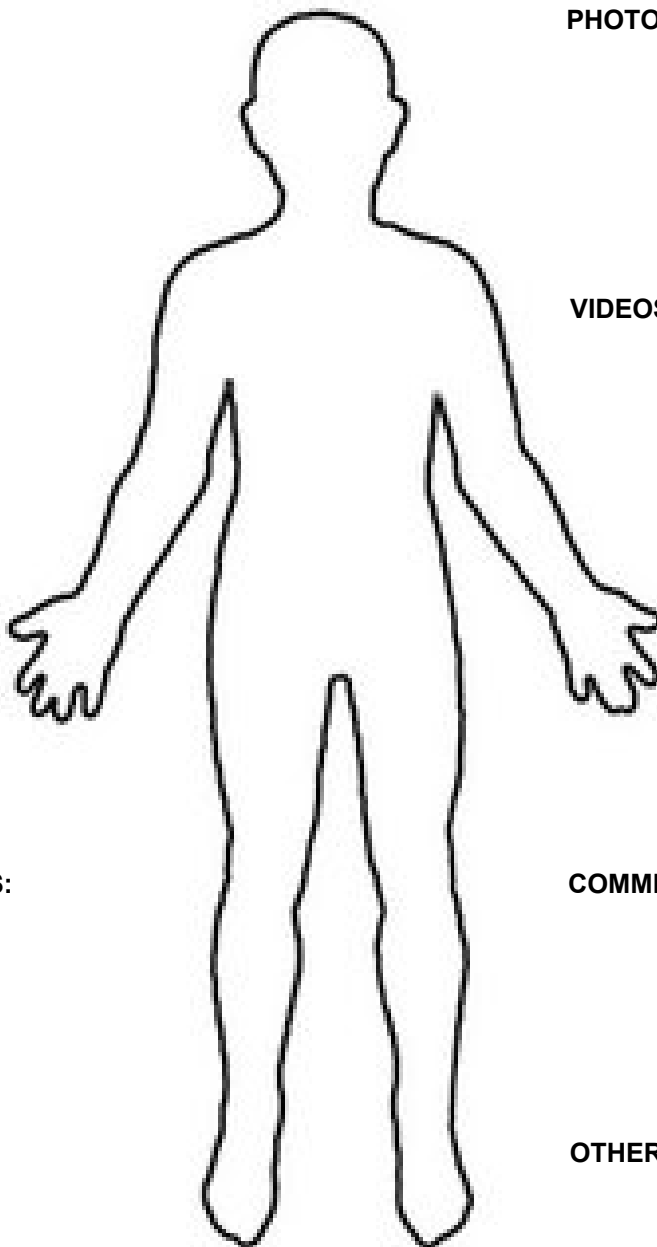
VIDEOS:

VIDEOS:

**LIKES, VOTES, SHARES,
ETC.:**

**LIKES, VOTES, SHARES,
ETC.:**

COMMENTS AND MESSAGES:

COMMENTS AND MESSAGES:

OTHER CONTENT:

OTHER CONTENT:

Who Sees What?

Group members:

Platform:

- As a group, **research** what kinds of *privacy tools and settings* your platform has that allow you to decide who sees what material you post. Make sure to include at least four different tools or settings.

- **Explain** how to use the tools you've researched in the form of a tip sheet, a poster, or another format approved by me.

- **Present** your product to the rest of the class and be prepared to answer any questions they may have.

- **Revise** your product based on the questions and feedback you received during your presentation. I will make copies of your final product to share with the whole class.

Think Before You Share

Most of the time when people send things to you, they're okay with you sharing them with others. If you don't know for sure, think twice before doing this.

Most Canadian students believe it's right to get someone's permission before posting or sharing things with them in it: **nine out of ten** students think you should ask before posting a bad or embarrassing photo of someone and **more than half** think you should ask before posting *any* photo.

Students also have faith that their friends **will** do the right thing: **eight out of ten** say that if someone posts a photo of them that they don't want people to see, their first step would be to ask the poster to take it down – almost twice as many as the next-most-popular step.

If someone **shares something with you** with somebody else in it, ask yourself:

- Did the person who sent this to me mean for it to be shared?
- Did they have permission from the person who's in it?
- How would I feel if somebody shared something like this with me in it?

If what you received makes that person look bad, would embarrass them or could hurt them if it got around, *don't* pass it on. The person who sent it to you may have meant it as a joke, but jokes can be a lot less funny when something is seen by the wrong person.

A lot of people – boys especially – get pressured by their friends to share nude photos of their girlfriends or boyfriends. It can be hard to stand up to this pressure, but you have to think about how much giving in could hurt you and your girlfriend or boyfriend.

Fixing things if they go wrong

Everyone makes bad choices sometimes. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't do everything you can to fix things:

- If you shared something you shouldn't have, the first step is to ask the people you sent it to *not* to pass it on.
- If someone else posted something you sent them, start by asking them to take it down. This is actually pretty effective most of the time.
- **Remember not to do anything while you're mad:** give yourself time to cool down and, if you can, talk to the person offline.
- If they refuse to take it down, don't try to get back at them by sharing private things they sent you, harassing them or getting your friends to gang up on them. For one thing, this almost always makes things worse. For another, the more you get back at them, the more it might look like it's just as much your fault as theirs.
- If you're tagged in a photo that you don't like, remember that a lot of photo-sharing and social networking sites may let you take your name off any pictures you've been tagged in.
- For more serious things, for instance if it's a partly or fully nude picture or video, if it's defamatory (it's not true and hurts your reputation) or if it's being used to harass or bully you, you can ask the site or service that was used to share it to take it down. In those cases you can report it to the police too.
- If you are in a situation where a person is threatening to share a nude photo of you unless you provide more nude photos – involve a trusted adult and contact police.

What Should I Do?

Read the scenarios below and think about the questions to each one. Be ready to discuss your opinion with the class.

1. Madelyn posts a link to her favourite song and made sure that only her friends could see it. One of her friends' parents sees it and worries that Madelyn might be depressed because it was such a sad song, so she tells Madelyn's parents. When Madelyn's parents talks to her about it they are upset that she had "hid" the post from them and she is upset because she feels that they invaded her privacy.

    What should Madelyn do? What should her parents do?

    Questions to consider:

    - How will what Madelyn decides to do affect how much her parents trust her?
    - How will what her parents decide to do affect what Madelyn will do the next time she wants to talk to her parents about something?
    - Which is more important, Madelyn's right to privacy or her parents' responsibility to look after her?

2. Jaime takes a picture of himself and his friend Kyle after a day at the beach. He thinks he looks really good in the picture so he wants to post it, but Kyle asks him not to because his hair is standing up in a funny way. Jaime agrees but later "forgets" not to post it. A lot of their friends Like and share the photo and Kyle gets angry at Jaime for breaking his promise. Kyle thinks about getting even by breaking into Jaime's account and pretending to be him.

    What should Jaime do? What should Kyle do?

    Questions to consider:

    - How will what Jaime does affect his friendship with Kyle?
    - How might other people treat Kyle differently if he plays his prank on Jaime?
    - Which is more important, Jaime's right to do what we wants with a photo he took or the promise he made to Kyle?

3. Curtis and his girlfriend Jeri have a fight. Later, Curtis goes online and posts an angry message: he doesn't mention Jeri by name, but anyone who knows them both recognizes who he's talking about. One of Jeri's friends sees the post and tells Jeri and all her friends about it. They text each other about it for the rest of the night and decide to get back at Curtis by posting some private photos that will get him in trouble with his parents – but there are several other people in the photos who are likely to get in trouble as well if *their* parents see them.

    What should Curtis do? What should Jeri do?

    Questions to consider:

    - How will what Curtis does affect his relationship with Jeri?
    - How will what Jeri does affect their other friends? Will it change how much everyone enjoys interacting online?

- Which was worse, what Curtis did or what Jeri is planning to do?
    - Why?
    - What rules or social codes did either of them break?
- Which is more important, Curtis's right to express himself or his duty to think about who he might hurt by what he said?
    - Did he try hard enough to balance those?
    - Is there anything else he could have done to keep from hurting anyone?
- What should either Curtis or Jeri do to fix things?