

What is Meant By the Term Digital Literacy?

The term “digital literacy” means being able to use technology in effective and intelligent ways.

Many people are familiar with the term “literacy.” It means being able to use printed and written information to learn, grow, and be successful in our lives.

Now the term “digital literacy” is being used more and more. It means being able to use technology in effective and intelligent ways.

Some people also talk about “media literacy.” That includes being thoughtful about the information we read and see online and in social media.

When we use all kinds of technologies, we need to think about:

- ▶ Protecting personal information.
- ▶ Avoiding online scams.
- ▶ Using technologies safely and responsibly.
- ▶ Communicating with others respectfully.

- ▶ You can also evaluate technologies as a family. Talk about your family’s values. What shows, games, online behaviours etc. match those values?
- ▶ Talk with your children and teens about the information they see online. We can’t believe everything we read and hear. Much of it may be false.
 - Young people need to think critically about information they read and hear.
 - They need to think about various perspectives, not just one opinion on an issue.
 - Can they spot advertisements? Some information is trying to sell something.
 - Checking more than one source helps confirm information is reliable.
- ▶ Families can ask schools what they are doing to teach students digital and media literacy. They can also ask how everyone can help. Schools might be able to share resources or host information nights for parents to help them be more informed about digital literacy. Ask what is possible.

- ▶ Building digital literacy skills is a moving target. Technology and online activities continue to evolve. The key is to keep communications open. Conversations and regular reminders can help students be safe and successful in their education journey, and throughout their lives.

See www.commonsensemedia.org for parenting tips and frequently asked questions by age group, by topic, and by platform.

- ▶ Families may want to talk about a “pledge” their children can sign. Maybe this would be posted near a computer. See the sample on the following page.
- ▶ Or parents can come up with other creative ways to help students think about the following issues.

Sample Kids Pledge

(borrowed from www.safekids.com)

1. I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number, parents' work address or telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.
2. I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
3. I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my parent along.
4. I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parents.
5. I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do, I will tell my parents right away so that they can contact the service provider.
6. I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide upon the time of day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online, and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.
7. I will not give out my Internet password to anyone (even my best friends) other than my parents.
8. I will check with my parents before downloading or installing software or doing anything that could possibly hurt our computer or jeopardize my family's privacy.
9. I will be a good online citizen and not do anything that hurts other people or is against the law.
10. I will help my parents understand how to have fun and learn things online, and teach them things about the Internet, computers and other technology.

I agree to the above:

I will help my child follow this agreement and will allow reasonable use of the Internet as long as these rules and other family rules are followed:

Child signs here

Parent(s) signs here

