

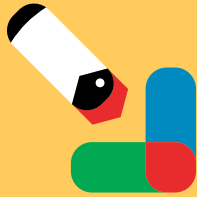


**Grades
7-12**

Digital Footprint: A Positive Digital Image



**ROGERS
cybersecure
catalyst**



“Digital footprint” refers to your online image or reputation; it’s who you appear to be and how people view you based on your actions using connected devices. It’s the virtual mark you leave behind; everything you post, comment on and share online, as well as what is shared and said about you, is there to stay – for better or for worse. Decision-makers, such as post-secondary institutions (colleges and universities) admissions ofcers, sports team scouts, talent agencies and employers will conduct an online background check. If you fail to build and protect a positive online image for yourself, those conducting the check won’t feel confident in your ability to behave in a way that reflects positively on them – and may view you as a risk. Leaving a positive digital footprint can help you stand out even in the most competitive circumstances.

It may take some time and effort to build, maintain or repair a positive image; however, making informed choices and presenting a reflection of your best self will help enhance future relationships and opportunities in education or employment.





Image or brand:

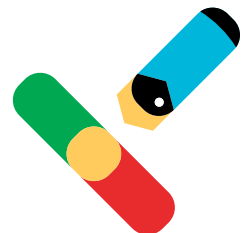
A mental picture or public perception of who you are and the characteristics that you represent, especially through media.

A DEFINITION

What contributes to your digital footprint?

Everything you say and do online can easily become publicly visible, even if your privacy settings are turned on and set to the highest security setting. Your content can be shared, screen captured or printed without your knowledge. Digital footprints can take the form of:

- Content published or posted online (e.g., blogs, photos or status updates).
- Conversations through direct messages (DMs) or private messages (PMs).
- Conversations on gaming platforms.
- Interactions with content (e.g., comments, shares and reactions).
- Subscriptions to content (e.g., YouTube channels).
- Reviews/ratings of companies, services or experiences (e.g., giving a restaurant you recently visited a bad review because your fries were cold).
- Connections and online communities; individuals or groups you're associated with are a reflection of who you are (e.g., you may be guilty by association).



Keep in mind that everything you do and say online can be:

- Discovered or seen by other people.
- Linked back to you, even if you deleted it.
- Tracked by online search tools and techniques.
- Collected and stored for future reference.
- Copied, captured and shared publicly.
- Broadcast to various networks or media outlets.

Remember this!

Like footprints in the sand, your digital footprint leaves an impression as to where you've been, and potentially where you may be heading. But, unlike footprints in the sand that can be washed away by the tide, your digital footprint can be permanent.



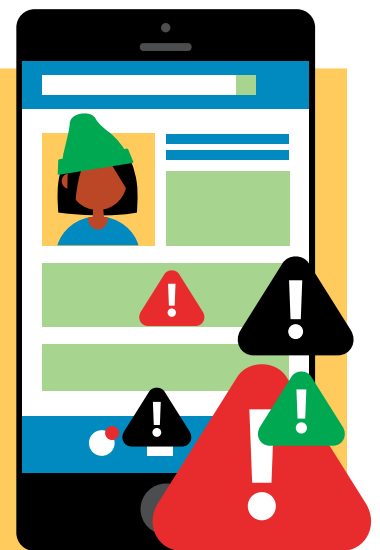
Online posts that may damage your reputation

Everyone makes mistakes. With a lot of your life being documented on almost a daily basis by family, friends and you, it's important to ensure your online reputation is as good as your offline one. Avoid sharing the following types of content:

- Provocative or inappropriate messages, photographs, videos or information.
- References to drinking, using drugs or any sort of criminal behaviour.
- Discriminatory posts related to race, gender, sexual orientation or religion.
- Harmful or hurtful words to talk about yourself or others.
- False information related to certifications and qualifications.
- Confidential or sensitive information about yourself or others.
- News from an unreliable source and, therefore, potentially sharing false information.
- Posting too frequently may also be viewed negatively.

Sharing any of the above may demonstrate the following characteristics:

- Poor judgement
- Lack of discretion
- Gullibility
- Malicious or hateful intent
- Lack of restraint
- You cannot be trusted



B RELEVANCE

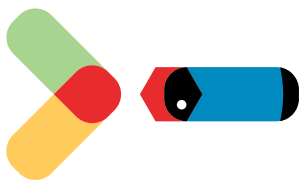
Top attributes sought by decision-makers

When researching candidates for sought-after positions, decision-makers are looking for:

- Information that supports your qualifications, achievements and skills.
- Character attributes reflected in respectful posts, community service and instances of building others up; these are qualities that exemplify kindness and leadership.
- Evidence that the candidate has an overall professional online image.

Decision-makers:

An individual or group that makes important decisions based on information gathering and assessment (e.g., school admission officers, talent agents, sport scouts and employers).



Guiding principles for a positive digital footprint

- Be kind and respectful toward others at all times.
- Showcase your skills and knowledge by sharing successes, achievements, and special interests or projects.
- Make an effort to help others build a positive digital footprint by recognizing their achievements.
- Keep humour light and positive; avoid political or contentious issues.
- Never use humour to get a laugh at someone else's expense.

Guiding Principles:

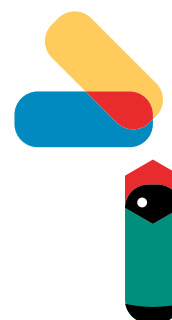
A set of moral values that help create a framework for good decision-making.





Take care with what you like or share

- Liking a post is viewed by many as an informal endorsement of the views of the content and/or the position taken by the original poster.
- Liking a post that is racist or prejudiced tells employers and schools that you share these views.
- Sharing a post associates you with the content. If you share something to raise awareness of an issue or topic that you feel is wrong or that you disagree with, be very clear and concise in your comment that accompanies the shared content.



Reflect on your understanding:

What do you want to be known for? How do you differentiate yourself from others? How can you illustrate this through online posts?

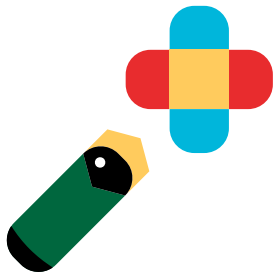


Beware: Once it's there – it's always there

Cache:

An Internet feature that permanently stores content in a hidden or inaccessible place, or takes deleted content and makes it publicly available. For example, if you delete or deactivate your Facebook profile, the photos/videos can still be found in a search engine cache.

- There's no such thing as a "Delete" button for the Internet.
- Deleting a post, message or anything shared online may remove it from your social media account or website, but it's never gone.
- People may take screenshots of private messages, and post or share them publicly.
- Search engines may store posts and images in their cache.
- Social media viewer tools gather and store posts from profiles and publicly share them on their site.
- There are no exceptions! All content shared online, even on platforms that claim messages disappear forever after a period of time (like Snapchat) or cannot be screen captured, is always there and can be found.
- When accepting terms and conditions for apps, ensure you understand what you're granting access to and that you're comfortable with it.



Search Engine:

A system that allows users to search for content on the Internet by entering keywords or phrases; it provides results in the form of websites, images, videos and other information (e.g., Google).





Tagging:

Often represented by the “at” symbol (@) on your keyboard. Used on social media websites before typing the name of a person or organization, to get their attention and notify them that they’ve been mentioned.

CALL TO ACTION

Help others build a positive digital footprint

- Share, comment on and like positive and informative content from trustworthy sources; participate in discussion threads from verified sources in a respectful way.
- Tagging people you know in posts about content they’d be interested in helps that person build their digital footprint – again, make sure it’s from a trusted source and keep it positive.



Go positive, not personal!

Remember to always keep your personal information private, even when creating a positive digital footprint.



Strategic tagging and hashtags 101

- Strategically using tags can optimize a positive online presence for both yourself and the individuals/organizations you tag.
- Hashtags are a simple way for decisionmakers to discover your content. Use caution when using hashtags; search them to ensure that they're not linked to any embarrassing or inappropriate behaviour or content.

Hashtags:

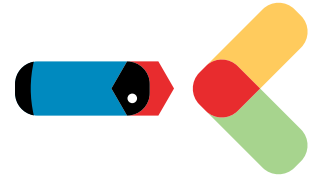
Often represented by the pound symbol (#) on your keyboard. Used on social media websites to make it easier to find posts or information related to a theme or the words being tagged.



Balance being discoverable with privacy

- Create a degree of separation between your professional and personal online footprint.
- Consider having a public account that's purely professional and positive, and personal private accounts shared only with family and trusted friends.





Protect your digital footprint

- If your social media profiles were taken over by someone and they posted offensive content, it may cause substantial damage to your image and reputation.
- Protect your image by using strong passwords and multi-factor authentication (MFA).
- If your profiles are breached, report it immediately to the platforms and change all passwords.

Multi-factor authentication:

Often referred to as "MFA", it's a security feature that verifies a user's identity by requiring two or more pieces of evidence (factors) or credentials such as passwords, numeric codes or answers to unique security questions.





Create a more positive digital footprint

- Everyone makes mistakes – and no one is expected to be perfect.
- Delete posts or comments that don't reflect well on you.
- Even though there's a chance that something posted online is "always there", deleting posts makes them harder to find, and the act of removing them shows personal growth.
- Focus on posting positive content; over a period of time, this will demonstrate a pattern of good behaviour and personal growth.

Reflect on your understanding:

When was the last time you scrolled back to the early days of your social media profiles? What was your first Tweet or Facebook status update?
Is it something you'd be embarrassed about if a teacher or employer saw it?



ACTIVITY **1**

Activities are a useful way for you to test and demonstrate your knowledge on the topic covered in this resource.

Scavenger Hunt

What does your digital footprint look like right now?

Conduct a scavenger hunt on your various online profiles and see if you can find the following:



ACTIVITY 2

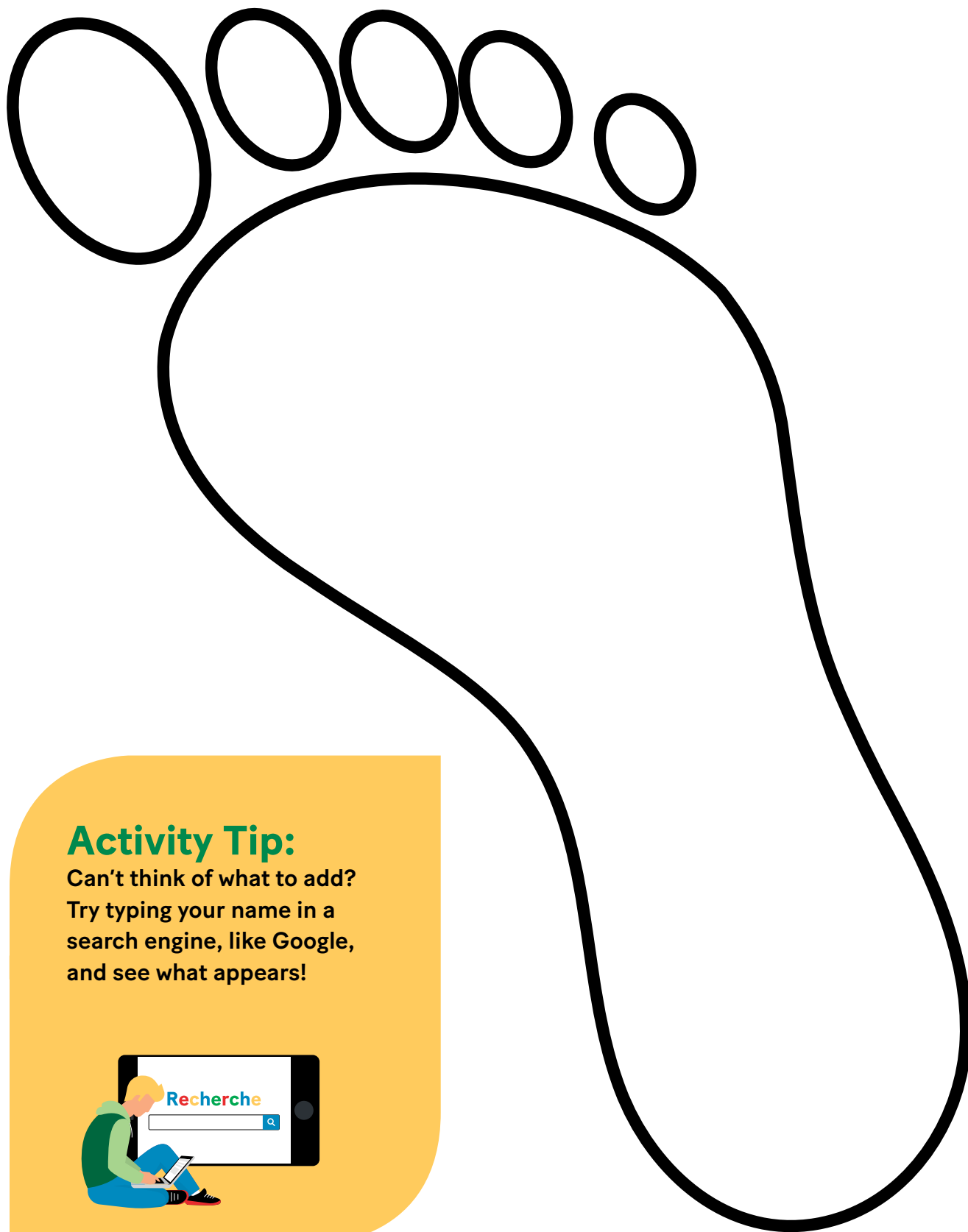
What's in your digital footprint?

Below is an example of a visual representation of a digital footprint; the websites, profiles, activities and content you contribute online while using your connected devices like cellphones or computers. What does your digital footprint look like? In the blank footprint on the next page, draw or write what would appear in your digital footprint.

This can include:

- Your favourite social media platform logo
- A mobile app you recently installed
- The most recent photo you shared
- Music from your favourite artist that you just downloaded
- Favourite video game
- The name of a friend who you texted last





Activity Tip:

Can't think of what to add?
Try typing your name in a
search engine, like Google,
and see what appears!





FOR MORE INFORMATION



For more information on cybersecurity, or to continue the conversation and learning process, visit the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security website:

<https://cyber.gc.ca/en/>.

Kids Help Phone:

Contact by text message at 686868 or by phone at 1-800-668-6868 from across Canada, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; or access their resources online: kidshelpphone.ca



