

Session 3: What We Leave Behind Online (Digital Footprints)

Every post, like, comment, share, and search leaves a small trail online. This is called a digital footprint. This session helps you understand what you leave behind and how oversharing can affect safety and reputation.

Session Objective

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Understand what a digital footprint is.
- Identify actions that leave a trail online.
- Think before posting or sharing.
- Understand how oversharing can affect safety and reputation.
- Use simple privacy choices to protect yourself.

What is a digital footprint?

A digital footprint is the permanent trail of information you leave behind every time you use the internet, like a set of tracks you leave in the sand. It includes everything you do online, such as:

- **Posts:** Sharing a photo or status update.
- **Comments:** Writing text under someone else's post.
- **Likes:** Reacting with a heart or thumbs-up.
- **Shares:** Forwarding or reposting content.

- **Searches:** Looking up topics or questions.
- **Tags:** Adding names or locations to a post or photo.
- **Messages:** Sending private or group chat history.

Remember: once you share something online, it can be easily copied or saved. Your digital footprint becomes a permanent record that can impact your life in several ways:

- **Privacy and Safety:** Your online history can reveal sensitive details about where you are and what you do.
 - **Reputation:** What you post shapes how others perceive your character and values.
 - **Relationships:** Your digital behavior influences how friends and family trust you.
 - **Future Opportunities:** Many schools and employers look at your online presence when considering you for admissions or jobs.
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What can make your digital footprint risky?

Certain online habits can expose you to unnecessary risks. Being mindful of these actions helps you maintain a safer online presence:

- **Sharing your real-time location:** Tagging where you are can allow others to track your physical movements.
- **Posting personal photos publicly:** Publicly sharing photos can compromise your privacy and allow others to use your images without permission.
- **Using weak privacy settings:** Open profiles allow strangers to see information intended only for friends and family.
- **Sharing school or institution details:** Mentioning exactly where you study or live helps malicious actors identify your daily routine or location.
- **Interacting with strangers:** Replying to unknown people can lead to unwanted contact, scams, or cyberbullying.

Story: Nisha and the location tag

Nisha is 16 and likes posting selfies. She uploads a photo in front of her institution gate and adds a location tag. Many people like the post. A friend later points out that the photo shows where she lives. Nisha realises she has shared more than she wanted. She removes the location tag, changes privacy settings, and starts thinking more before posting.

Activity 1: True or False

1. Everything I post online disappears after one day.
☐ True ☐ False
 2. A digital footprint is the trail we leave online.
☐ True ☐ False
 3. A location tag can show where I am.
☐ True ☐ False
 4. Only adults have a digital footprint.
☐ True ☐ False
 5. I should think before posting a photo or comment.
☐ True ☐ False
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Activity 2: Safe or unsafe

6. Posting your school location openly.
☐ Safe ☐ Unsafe
7. Setting your account to private.
☐ Safe ☐ Unsafe
8. Sharing a meme with no personal details.
☐ Safe ☐ Unsafe
9. Tagging your live location in a public post.
☐ Safe ☐ Unsafe

10. Checking who can view your story.

☐ Safe ☐ Unsafe

11. Commenting rudely under someone's photo.

☐ Safe ☐ Unsafe

Activity 3: Match the action with the result

Action	Footprint Left Behind
Posting a photo online	Visible post
Searching for a topic	Search trail
Liking a video	Activity trail
Tagging your location	Location trail
Writing a comment	Comment trail

Activity 4: Think Before You Post

Reflect on the following questions to help you make safer online choices:

1. Safety Check: If a photo reveals your home, school, or institution, what risks might it create?

Why is it safer to keep that location private?

2. Impact Awareness: How could a message or comment you share today affect you or someone else in the future?

3. Pre-Posting Habits: What specific steps (like checking privacy settings or removing location tags) do you take to protect your privacy before you hit 'post'?

4. Seeking Support: Who are the trusted adults or friends you can turn to for advice when you're unsure if a post is safe to share?

Activity 5: Make it safer

1. "I am at my institution gate right now." Safer version: _____
 2. "My class starts at 9 am every day." Safer version: _____
 3. "Here is my photo with location on." Safer version: _____
 4. "Add me, anyone can see this account." Safer version: _____
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Activity 6: Fill in the blanks

1. A digital _____ is the trail we leave online.
 2. A location tag can show where we _____.
 3. . Before posting, it is good to think, "Will this _____ online?"
 4. Privacy settings help protect our _____.
 5. Once something is shared online, it can be _____ or copied.
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Activity 7: What would you do?

1. What would you do if you posted something by mistake?

2. What would you do if someone asks for your location online?

3. What would you do if you are not sure whether a photo is safe to post?

4. How can a private account help you?

Quick Recap

Topic	Key Point
Online Actions	Every online action leaves a permanent trail.
Safety & Reputation	Oversharing can impact your safety and how others see you.
Privacy Settings	Settings help, but they are not perfect protection.
Thoughtful Posting	Think before you post, because the internet remembers everything.

One line to remember

If I would not want it remembered later, I should think twice before posting it.

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