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## Introduction

These guidelines can help you understand how to use social media safely, responsibly, and respectfully for fun and for learning.

These are some ways students are using social media:

- Watching YouTube videos
- Making movies in MovieStarPlanet
- Posting in an Edmodo or Schoology group
- Talking to friends in Club Penguin

## Definition of Social Media

Social media is any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication, including social networks, blogs, photo-sharing platforms, internet websites, internet forums, and wikis. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Edmodo, Schoology, Instagram, YouTube, Google+, and Flickr.



## Create the Digital Image You Want

### Your reputation.

Your reputation is based on what you say and do. Want others to see you as friendly? Smile and say “hi” to people. Want others to see you as smart? Raise your hand when you know the answer in class. Want to be seen as funny? Tell jokes.

This is true both in person and online. Online we call your reputation your “digital image.” It’s harder to control your digital image than the one you create in person because:

1. More people can see what you say and do, as well as information posted about you, when it is online. Think about these people as your invisible audience. A posting that you and your friends would take as a joke might be seen in a different way by others. What’s more, those others can share it with their friends—people who may not know you at all.
2. Once something is online, it really never goes away. All of the information online about you, whether posted by you or others, makes up your digital image. Later on, someone can read your post all over again, as if they are seeing it for the first time.
3. How you act online should reflect who you are (or try to be) in person. Anything you post can make someone feel happy or hurt.

### Be your best self online.

Try to act online the way you want others to act toward you. For example, would you want to be yelled at in public? Of course not. So, instead of just posting an angry response if a friend’s post made you mad, you can tell your friend privately how you feel and ask your friend to delete their original comment. An easy rule to remember is “praise publicly and criticize privately”—and it’s true both online and in person.

Before you finish a post, ask yourself:

- Will my post:
  - Help someone learn something?
  - Make someone feel good?
  - Be liked by others?
- How would I feel if:
  - It was so popular that thousands of people watched it and it went viral?
  - A friend, enemy, family member, or neighbor saw it?
  - People were talking about it at school?

This is true whether you post as yourself, or a character in a game. Even if you use an avatar, you are still you. So write in a way that will make you feel proud when you look back on your past posts, not sorry. By acting safely, responsibly, and respectfully online, you are a good digital citizen.

### **Be positive.**

Being smart about how you act online can help you make more friends and connect with others who like the things you like. Here are some examples of how you can use social media in positive ways:

- Comment with useful information that will help others learn something new, for example, share a link to a how-to video about the topic you are commenting on.
- Ask for help with homework.
- Share how you're learning something you're proud of, so others can learn from you. For example: you have recently learned how to identify edible plants in your local park and you make a video so your friends can also learn how.
- Find and connect with people who are successful in areas
- Work together with classmates to complete a group assignment.



### **Know who you're talking to.**

When you post, you may be sharing your thoughts, pictures, comments, and information about yourself with the general public. Even when you're just posting to friends, it's possible that a teacher, grandmother, or even someone in another country will see your post. Because you can't really control who sees what, make sure your posts add positively to your reputation.

## Post Responsibly – Be Mindful of Your Audience

### Communicating online is different.

You're used to communicating with people you meet in school or in the community, but communicating on social media is sometimes different. When you say something helpful or hurtful in person, you can see how your friends feel by looking at their faces. If they misunderstand you, you can explain or apologize right away. When you're helpful, your friend's smile lets you know she understands what you mean and makes you feel good.

You can't see your friends' reactions online the same way you can in person. You might not even know how someone felt until after he replies, maybe in anger. Others may even have joined in. Now, you don't just have your friend to apologize to, you have your whole class. Or club. Or grade. Or school.

On the other hand, you may have been the one who gave someone kind words. Those words may have helped her feel smart enough to make a movie on the MovieStarPlanet social game platform that brought her fame with her friends online and at school.

“Using social media with my students has helped me strengthen relationships with them. It has also enabled me to understand and support my students as bullying issues at school or online bubble up. Students know that if there is a problem, I am here to help them, not just in the classroom but also online.”

*Anna Dawidowska  
Teacher,  
Grover Cleveland High School  
New York City Department of Education*

### Talk with your family.

Here are some questions to ask yourself and your family:

- What will help everyone in the family maintain the reputation they want?
- What information does your family want to keep private?
- What makes sense to share with friends or small groups?
- What is fine to post publicly?
- When should you get permission from one another before posting (pictures, stories, etc.)?

If your mom posts a picture of you that you didn't want shared, tell her in person how the picture does not go with the digital image that you want to have. Then help her find a picture that you think represents you well. Together you can find a picture that shows your best self.

**Follow school rules.**

The rules you have for your school and classroom are rules for online, too. Your teachers will probably set rules for tags, comments, and posts. Usually, you shouldn't tag posts, pictures, or videos unless your teacher and the person you are tagging give you permission. Always respect your classmates and schoolmates and be thoughtful about how you behave toward them online.

Keep in mind that the adults at your school are responsible for your safety—and the safety of all the students. That's why your teachers have the right to follow what you say and do online if it affects what happens at school. This is true whether you are using your own computer (or phone, or tablet) or a device that belongs to your school.



It doesn't matter if you are signed into a private account or using your Wi-Fi network at home. When it comes to your safety—and the safety of others—the school's rules rule. The New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) Discipline Code <<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/DisciplineCode/default.htm>> defines what's not allowed in school or might create a problem at school. The rules in the Discipline Code also apply when you're using social media. For example, even if a fight on social media starts outside of school, it can carry over and create a problem at school that can lead to students being punished at school.

Refer to the Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy (IAUSP) <<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/InternetAcceptableUse/default.htm>> for the detailed NYCDOE policy.



## Consider the Consequences of Your Online Actions

### **Be safe.**

Be sure to follow your class, school, and family' rules about sites that you can and cannot visit. Going to an online place that you're not supposed to visit can be just as dangerous as going someplace in real life that your teacher or parents have said is not safe.

### **Know your privacy settings.**

Every social media site has privacy settings. Teachers and parents can help you set up your accounts in a safe way. Do your best to have your settings let classmates, friends, and others you choose see your posts, but no one else.

But no matter how you set your privacy settings, there is no such thing as total privacy online. People can take screenshots of your posts and comments, download or make copies of your pictures, and share your content among their friends, who may not be your friends. To be safe, never share information such as your address, phone numbers, and route to and from school.

### **Keep passwords private.**

Just like you wouldn't give someone the key to your diary, you should never share passwords with friends. What happens in your online spaces is a part of your reputation. If you share your passwords, you are giving others the ability to pretend they are you online, and that can lead to problems not just for you, but for your family, as well.

Worried about forgetting your passwords? For accounts you use at school, your teachers probably have a copy of your password or can help you reset it. At home, parents can help you make sure you don't lose or forget your private account information.



## Take Threats of Cyberbullying Seriously

### Cyberbullying takes many forms.

Bullying doesn't only happen in person or at school. It can also happen online, and then it's called cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is saying something online that is mean or hurtful on purpose, for example:

- Sending mean messages or harassing someone
- Posting comments that are mean, not true, or create rumors
- Sharing an embarrassing photo of a classmate

### Treat others as you want to be treated.

When interacting online, treat others the way you would want them to treat you, just as you would in person. Before you post, consider whether you are making a harmless joke or a doing something that could be hurtful. Think about how you would feel if someone made a similar joke about you.

### If you see something, say something.

If you, or someone you know, are being bullied online or in person, it is best not to respond or react online. Instead, tell your teacher and your parent(s) so they can help you decide what to do next. If you don't feel comfortable talking to your teacher, you can write an email to [Tech@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:Tech@schools.nyc.gov) that describes what's going on.

“At our school, students know that if there is ever any drama that carries over to the online world, our teachers and principal have our back. We can go right to them if need be. When we do, I don't know how they do it exactly, but they make sure they always put an end to it. This makes for a more positive online experience for all of us.”

*Kevin Torres  
Hudson High School*

## Understand the Fine Print and Other Rules

### **There is no right to privacy when using school-related social media.**

If you are using the school's device or network, the school may review what you post. The IAUSP sets forth the "Internet-Don't List" related to online communication that includes the following:

- Causing harm to others or damaging technology-related property;
- Gaining or attempting to gain unauthorized access to school systems;
- Using school technology and/or systems for financial gain or business activities; or
- Engaging in criminal or unlawful activities online.

### **Get to know other DOE rules.**

In addition to the IAUSP, the applicable policies include, but are not limited to:

- Chancellor's Regulation A-830, Discrimination/Harassment < <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/B5924420-C861-41DB-A586-DCF899060B29/0/A830.pdf>>
- Chancellor's Regulation A-831, Peer Sexual Harassment < <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/6CBE7F6C-D74A-4D58-A0B8-28CB057849CE/0/A831.pdf>>
- Chancellor's Regulation A-832, Student-to-Student Harassment, Intimidation and/or Bullying < <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/68542AE0-CA99-4C8B-A31B-A1E96FEC7633/0/A832.pdf>>
- Citywide Standards of Intervention and Discipline Measures (Discipline Code) <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/DisciplineCode/default.htm>