



Lesson Time: 25–30 minutes

Protecting Your Identity

Objectives & Outcomes

Lesson Objectives: Students will learn about identity theft, how to avoid an identity theft crisis, and what to do if their identity has already been compromised.

Lesson Outcomes: *Students will be able to...*

- define identify theft/crisis, tell how to avoid it, or learn how to repair it.
- distinguish between personal and private information.

Subject Area Connection: Language Arts, Information Technology

Background

Identity theft, or stealing and using someone else's private information for personal gain or to cause harm, isn't just an adult problem. For example, according to the Federal Trade Commission website, a child's Social Security number can be used by identity thieves to apply for government benefits, open bank and credit card accounts, apply for a loan or utility service, or rent a place to live.

Therefore, it is very important for students to be aware that things like this can actually happen if they are not careful. Once an identity has been stolen, it can take a very long time to sort everything out. Teaching children how to protect private information, recognize scams, and what steps to take to avoid an identity crisis is much easier than trying to repair the damage after it happens.

"It is easier to take steps to avoid an identity crisis than it is to repair the damage afterwards."

Getting Ready

Teacher Preparation: To prepare for this lesson, briefly research identity theft to learn which types of information are more apt to be stolen and how they're used to compromise someone's identity. Is children's identity theft different? How? What precautions can parents take?

Materials Required:

- paper
- pencil with eraser
- blank index cards
- large paper key-shaped cutout

Introduction and Modeling

Ask students if they, a family member, or friend has ever had anything stolen. What was taken and were the items ever recovered? Was the thief caught and how did the theft affect the individual or family?

Have they ever known anyone whose personal identity was stolen? What happened and what was the extent of the damage? How did the thief access the information to steal the person's identity? How long did it take to repair the damage?

Have they ever known a teen or child whose identity was stolen? Identity thieves sometimes target children because parents are less likely to find out that someone is assuming their child's identity unless their information is specifically being monitored.

Key Vocabulary

crisis: a time of instability or disturbance in a person's life that calls for change.

identity: who someone is; one's self.

register: to enroll in something by giving information.

Procedure

1. Identity thieves usually seek out private information to steal. Do students know the difference between information that should be kept private (secure) and things that are okay to share? Let's find out.
2. Write the following items on the board and ask students to read list silently.
 - full legal name
 - favorite color
 - address
 - phone number
 - names of pets
 - Social Security number
 - date of birth
 - number of siblings
 - mother's maiden name
 - favorite songs
 - favorite movies
 - e-mail address
 - gender
 - driver's license number
 - color of eyes
 - name of school
 - favorite foods
 - credit card/debit card numbers
3. Ask for volunteers to come up to the board and draw a line through private information that should be kept secure. Have them circle information that is okay to share. How can this particular information be (or not be) used to compromise a person's identity? Discuss.
4. Ask students to brainstorm sites that might ask for private information in order for them to register to use the site. Will sharing the requested information put their identity (or the identity of their parents) at risk? What can they do to find out? If possible, visit one of these sites during class time to see if there is a site map with a link to provide more information about privacy policies. Profile settings on social media sites should also be evaluated to make sure those are not an identity theft risk as well.
5. Some e-mail and/or popup scams exist for the sole purpose of tricking Internet users into providing private information that can be used to compromise their identities and accounts. What should a customer do? This is a type of phishing, and should be reported to the company.
6. Distribute blank index cards and divide students into groups. Have each group create two e-mail examples—one that is harmless and one that is carefully worded to get the recipient to disclose private information. Have each group share their email models with other groups to evaluate. Can they detect the attempt to collect potentially harmful information? Discuss.

Discussion Questions

- How might an identity thief use your private information for personal gain or benefit?
- What are some ways an identity thief can access or find your private information?
- What are some types of information that an identity thief might want to get from you?
- If someone has stolen or compromised your identity, what should you do?
- What are some ways to protect your identity or private information?
- How can you tell if your identity or private information has been stolen?
- Could a monitoring or identity protection service help you? How?

Evaluation

Give each student a large paper key cutout or model how to draw a big key outline on a sheet of paper. Inside the key shape, have them write down the definition of identity theft and ask them to list at least five types of information that should always be kept private. This attention to online security is "key" to helping protect their identities.

Tips for Tailoring this Lesson

For Higher Grade Levels

- Give students the assignment of visiting the Federal Trade Commission website (consumer.ftc.gov), to find out the necessary steps to repair identity theft if it happens. The "Privacy and Identity" section has a lot of information about identity protection and identity theft repair. Have students write and submit a short report about their findings.

For Lower Grade Levels

- Discuss the definitions of *required* and *optional*. When those terms are used to register on certain sites, what do they mean? Why might a site ask for your age? Why might it require a parent's permission for you to use the site? Are these requests ever okay? When? If information is listed as optional, should answers be provided? Why or why not?

Alignment to Standards and Frameworks

Common Core State Standards: College & Career Readiness

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Anchor Standards for Reading

CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Anchor Standards for Language

CCRA.L.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCRA.L.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Partnership for 21st Century Framework

Partnership for 21st Century Framework: the framework comprises the skills, knowledge and expertise students should master to succeed in work and life in the 21st century. Partnership for 21st Century Skills www.p21.org

Initiative

Manage Goals and Time

- Set goals with tangible and intangible success criteria
- Balance tactical (short-term) and strategic (long-term) goals
- Utilize time and manage workload efficiently

Work Independently

- Monitor, define, prioritize and complete tasks without direct oversight

Self-Direction

Be Self-directed Learners

- Go beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise
- Demonstrate initiative to advance skill levels towards a professional level
- Demonstrate commitment to learning as a lifelong process
- Reflect critically on past experiences in order to inform future progress

Leadership and Responsibility

Guide and Lead Others

- Use interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal
- Leverage strengths of others to accomplish a common goal
- Inspire others to reach their very best via example and selflessness
- Demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in using influence and power

Be Responsible to Others

- Act responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind