



Lesson Time: 25–30 minutes

## Online Reputations Matter

### Objectives & Outcomes

**Lesson Objectives:** Students will learn what an online reputation is, why it matters, and how the things they post online can become long-lasting public information.

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

- determine if their current online activity will result in a good long-term reputation.
- manage online information and conduct, and take control of their digital footprints.

**Subject Area Connection:** Language Arts, Information Technology

### Background

Everything we say or do these days can be captured and uploaded to all kinds of devices and social media—with the potential of a shelf life that lasts forever. Our online information and activity can follow us anywhere and everywhere into the future. It can be used to evaluate applicants for college admission, employment opportunities, or even personal or business relationships. In other words, an online reputation (good or bad) can have an effect on our lives years down the road!

Students must realize that how they conduct themselves online in the present does matter for the future. Photos, videos, statuses, tweets, etc. really do have the potential of being archived somewhere online permanently. A little forethought about maintaining a good online reputation now can avoid trouble later on.

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### Getting Ready

**Teacher Preparation:** To prepare for this lesson, make copies of the Online Reputation Matters worksheet (attached) for each student. Also, take a look at your own “digital footprint” to get an idea of what kinds of personal information and online activity show up when you search.

#### Materials Required:

- pencil with eraser
- blank index card
- paper
- Online Reputation Matters worksheet (attached)

### Introduction and Modeling

Ask students to *define reputation*. Does a good reputation matter? Does it make a difference in life, in relationships, or in a career? How about a bad reputation? How can it hinder an individual or cause problems?

Would students hire someone with a known bad reputation if they were an employer? Discuss.

Would a good reputation help when applying for scholarships or admission to college? Would a bad reputation jeopardize the process? Why? How?

Consider online reputation. What is it? Does it matter? Is an “online” reputation as important as a “real life” reputation? Do prospective recruiters or employers actually care how candidates have conducted themselves online in the past? Let’s find out.

### Key Vocabulary

**reputation:** how someone is viewed by others based on their character, actions, or how they behave.

**digital footprint:** data relative to the online activity of one particular user.

## Procedure

1. Distribute the Online Reputation Matters worksheets and divide students into groups of five or six. Have them read each scenario and discuss. Do they agree or disagree with the outcomes?
2. Ask students to write a short argument (1–2 paragraphs on the back of the worksheet) to either defend or disagree with the outcome of one of the scenarios. Have a class discussion.
3. Of the two scenarios, Mason's situation was obviously the most troubling. What should he have done differently to avoid the negative outcome? Was there anything he could do to repair the damage afterwards? Have students make suggestions. Preventing a bad reputation online is far easier than repairing it.
4. Take a survey. How many students believe that college admissions personnel, coaches, or prospective employers actually take the time to look online at applicants' social media profiles, blogs, and other relevant accounts? Discuss.

### Note:

(From the Kaplan Test Prep website: "The percentages of college admissions officers who say they have Googled an applicant (29%) or visited an applicant's Facebook or other social networking page to learn more about them (31%) have risen to their highest levels yet, according to Kaplan Test Prep's 2013 survey of college admissions officers.")

5. Discuss the meaning of digital footprint. It is the trace you leave behind you as you move through and participate in online activities, searches, games, social media, etc. Basically, it is a digital portfolio of your actions in cyberspace. Some content is actively volunteered, such as on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc., when you deliberately add content. But some information is passive, such as the cookies collected when you visit certain sites. All the information combined make up your digital footprint.
6. Something else to consider is the fact that just because you delete something, it doesn't necessarily disappear. Your status, post, text, photo, or video might be shared, reposted, or retweeted many times before you realize it, and you can't take it back. Additionally, always be careful what you share or repost from a friend—and have them do the same for you.

## Discussion Questions

- If a college admissions official or prospective employer looked at your social media profiles right now, what would they learn about you and your online reputation? Would you change anything?
- Are your privacy settings correct? Are your accounts public? If so, consider changing your settings so that only your friends can see your content.
- What are some characteristics you see in others that reveal their good online reputations? Are these the same qualities you hope they see in you?
- What criteria do you use when adding online friends?

## Evaluation

If possible, have students Google their names to see what information comes up. Are they surprised by what they find or not? Is their online reputation a good one or do they need to reevaluate the things they are posting, tweeting, or texting? Remind them to think carefully before putting anything online—it might just pop back up on down the road!

## Tips for Tailoring this Lesson

### For Higher Grade Levels

- Divide students into groups to brainstorm a list of ideas of negative and positive online activities, posts, or other media that might influence the actions or decisions of a prospective college admissions representative or employer. Have them compare and discuss the consequences of each. Do digital footprints and online reputations matter?

### For Lower Grade Levels

- On the board, model for students how to draw the outline of a large footprint on a sheet of paper or provide copies of footprint outlines. Inside their footprints, have students compose a short paragraph or two about the importance of maintaining a good digital footprint and online reputation. Have them address how they can achieve these goals.

## Alignment to Standards and Frameworks

### Common Core State Standards:

#### College & Career Readiness

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#### Anchor Standards for Writing

**CCRA.W.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

**CCRA.W.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

#### Anchor Standards for Language

**CCRA.L.1** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

**CCRA.L.6** Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

### 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](http://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

##### Productivity and Accountability

##### Manage Projects

- Set and meet goals, even in the face of obstacles and competing pressures
- Prioritize, plan and manage work to achieve the intended result

##### Produce Results

- Demonstrate additional attributes associated with producing high quality products including the abilities to:
  - Work positively and ethically
  - Manage time and projects effectively
  - Multi-task
  - Participate actively, as well as be reliable and punctual
  - Present oneself professionally and with proper etiquette
  - Collaborate and cooperate effectively with teams
  - Respect and appreciate team diversity
  - Be accountable for results

# Online Reputation Matters

(Worksheet for Managing Your Online Reputation)

## Procedure

Read each scenario and discuss.

1. From the time he was a small child, Mason worked hard to be the best golfer possible. His parents paid for private lessons, transported him to golf tournaments every weekend, and made sacrifices for him to seriously pursue the sport. They also hoped it would all pay off in the way of a college scholarship—and it did. He was the best player on his high school golf team, and he was to be awarded a full ride to the college he wanted to attend after graduation.

However, on one of his few free weekends, he went to a party and started drinking with some other underage friends. Things got a little rowdy, and Mason ended up in the pool with his golf clubs and a half-empty beer bottle in his hands. An acquaintance snapped his picture with her cell phone, immediately uploaded it to Facebook, and tagged him in the post.

His high school golf coach and principal saw the post. As a result of trying to buckle down and discourage underage drinking, the administrators took action. Mason got kicked off the golf team and as a result he lost his scholarship.

All those years of Mason's hard work and sacrifice on the part of his parents went down the drain with a bad decision and one online photo.

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2. Kara has a heart for the elderly and has always visited the local nursing homes and volunteered whenever she could. Although only a high school junior, she started taking CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) classes during the summer and after school in order to be able to do more with the elderly residents. Her goal is to pursue a BS in Nursing after high school and specialize in geriatrics

Kara started a blog to share what she was doing and to inspire other teenagers to get involved in some sort of volunteer work in the community. Her blog acted as a platform to raise awareness of the needs of the elderly and to encourage more visitation. She also spearheaded talent shows, games, and other entertainment opportunities for the residents.

A geriatric physician in a nearby town found Kara's blog and read about her activities. After getting to know her and her family and seeing how much she was accomplishing with her determination and effort, he decided she was the kind of go-getter needed in the medical field for elderly care. He offered to sponsor many of her ideas, has already secured a hefty college scholarship on her behalf, and plans to offer her a lucrative nursing position in his practice after she graduates from college. Kara's excellent online reputation and display of good character traits resulted in positive things for her present—and her future!

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