



Lesson Time: 25–30 minutes

Legalities and More

Objectives & Outcomes

Lesson Objectives: Students will learn about plagiarism, safety and legalities of file sharing, and find out about the possible consequences of copyright infringement.

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

- understand that sharing any copyrighted material or media is illegal.
- evaluate the legality of files and downloads.
- describe the possible consequences of copyright infringement.

Subject Area Connection: Language Arts, Information Technology

Background

Many students (and adults) don't know that if they have peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing software installed on their computers, they might be distributing copyrighted material without realizing it. This means they can be legally and financially responsible even if they are not intentionally participating in infringing activities. There is also the possibility of infecting a computer with viruses and worms through file sharing to consider.

It is important for students to understand the legalities and risks of file sharing and how copyright infringement can affect them. They also need to learn what constitutes plagiarism and how to take steps to avoid it. When students are uneducated about these topics, it can put them at risk of breaking the law without even realizing what they are doing.

“... [Students may be] at risk of **breaking the law without even realizing** what they are **doing.**”

Introduction and Modeling

Ask for a show of hands of students who like to download songs, movies, or programs from the Internet. Do they purchase the downloads, or do they use peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing software? What kinds of P2P programs do they use?

Ask for another show of hands of those who know that installing P2P software on their computers might actually result in sharing copyrighted material without them realizing it. This is called copyright infringement.

One more show of hands. How many students know that even if they are not trying to intentionally participate in infringement activities, they might still be legally and financially responsible for copyright infringement? Discuss.

Getting Ready

Teacher Preparation: To prepare for this lesson, research the history, risks, and legalities of peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing and the details and penalties of copyright infringement and plagiarism. The Library of Congress's Copyright Office website is a great resource.

Materials Required:

- blank paper
- blank index cards
- pencil with eraser
- short paragraph from a well-known book or author

Key Vocabulary

legal: allowed by law.

copyright infringement: the use of works protected by copyright law without permission, or invasion.

plagiarism: copying someone else's work without authorization.

Procedure

1. Pass out blank paper and ask students to explain how peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing works. They may write a paragraph, list bullet points, or draw a simple diagram with labels. If applicable, divide students into groups to work together on this task.
2. Divide students into pairs to brainstorm or research how to take steps to make sure downloads are legal, what to look for in a P2P program, and what to do if there is already questionable software installed on a computer. What precautions can they take to keep their computer clean from viruses and worms that might result from file sharing?
3. Pass out index cards and have students write a short paragraph about themselves, but instruct them to be original. Afterwards, point out that the piece they just wrote technically belongs to them. They automatically own the copyright to their work. On the board demonstrate how to make a copyright symbol (©). Have students make the symbol on their index card below their paragraph.
4. Now, ask them how they would react if they spent many hours, days, weeks, months, or years writing a book, song, or play, only to have someone else copy their words or portions of their work without giving them credit. That is plagiarism, and it is against the law. Discuss how they would feel to have their work plagiarized.
5. Discuss the appropriate way to paraphrase without plagiarizing. Read a short paragraph aloud from a well-known book or author and have students paraphrase the content on a sheet of paper—without copying it word for word. What are some tips or suggestions the students can think of to learn how to paraphrase more skillfully?

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever considered that some P2P file sharing downloads might not always be legal? If so, have you thought about the possible consequences of downloading the content? Discuss.
- What are some P2P file sharing downloads that are okay to use? Why?
- How can you tell if the movies and songs you download are legal? Discuss.
- What can you do about the possibility of infecting your computer through file sharing?
- What constitutes plagiarism?
- What is fair use of copyrighted works? When and how can you utilize fair use of someone else's work?

Evaluation

Ask students to raise their hands if they plan to:

- take all precautions to make sure any future content they download is legal.
- check their computer for file sharing software that may be causing them to distribute copyrighted work without them realizing it and take appropriate action.
- learn how to use relevant copyrighted work without plagiarizing.

Tips for Tailoring this Lesson

For Higher Grade Levels

- Have students visit the Library of Congress's Copyright Office website to research how to find out who owns the copyright to certain materials and the consequences of copyright infringement. Have them write down how much the penalty can be for someone who breaks the law in this area (\$30,000 to \$150,000 per each work infringed). Discuss.

For Lower Grade Levels

- *Internet piracy* is another term for downloading illegal songs, videos, programs, etc. Have students write a few paragraphs comparing pirates on the high seas from years past to today's Internet pirates. How are they similar? How are they different? Discuss.

Alignment to Standards and Frameworks

Common Core State Standards: College & Career Readiness

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Anchor Standards for Reading

CCRA.R.4 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

CCRA.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

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

Social and Cross-Cultural Skills

Interact Effectively with Others

- Know when it is appropriate to listen and when to speak
- Conduct themselves in a respectable, professional manner

Work Effectively in Diverse Teams

- Respect cultural differences and work effectively with people from a range of social and cultural backgrounds
- Respond open-mindedly to different ideas and values
- Leverage social and cultural differences to create new ideas and increase both innovation and quality of work

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