

PROJECT IDEA STARTER

Digital Citizenship: Being Safe Online



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We live in a digital world. New social media sites are being created, people share content online, and more news is being received through Facebook and TikTok than by television. Having the world at our fingertips has many benefits, but it also has risks. How much time is spent on screens? How do we protect our data? What news sources are reliable? It is important to learn about the digital world so we can make it safe, welcoming, and a trustworthy space for everyone!

BACKGROUND

Safety online is very important. Did you know identity theft affects 1 in 20 Americans each year? Some of the most common causes of identity theft are related to public information sharing and online data breaches. Identity theft happens when someone takes your social security number

and/or passwords. Then, they purchase items with your money, open accounts in your name, or get you to share more information. You need to know what information should be kept private. Social security numbers, account numbers, and passwords are a few examples. Never share your passwords with anyone, and

make sure passwords are strong. Learn more about ways to protect your data at consumer.ftc.gov.

Your Online Brand

Be careful what you post online because it can affect your future, including your career. Think about how your posts might be viewed by a teacher, boss, future

PLAN YOUR PROJECT

Use this idea starter AND publication 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide* as the starting place for your 4-H self-determined project. The *Self-Determined Project Guide* is available from your county OSU Extension office or on the Web at ohio4h.org/selfdetermined. You may choose to do a little or a lot depending on your level of interest. Be sure to register your project with your county OSU Extension office.

employer, or even your friends and family. Not everything must be shared. If you are questioning if something is okay to post, it likely is not!

If you post something and then change your mind and delete it, the post may still exist. Someone may have shared your post or taken a screenshot. Understanding digital citizenship includes understanding the amount of time spent online. We spend a lot of time looking at screens on phones, computers, tablets, and televisions—you name it! According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the average teen is online for almost 9 hours a day, not counting schoolwork.

There are good things about social media, such as connecting with friends, sharing interests, and finding community and support, but using social media also comes with risks. These risks include exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, identity theft, and hacking. There is no single answer to what a healthy amount of screen time is for everyone, but it is important to think about your own screen time and develop a healthy balance.

News is shared via social media now more than ever. However, not all news comes from a trustworthy, reliable source. Being skeptical can help you determine if something is true. Is the news piece fact or opinion? Does it share all sides of the story? Is there an ad or sponsor associated with the news piece? All these factors affect the credibility of a news article, a TikTok post, or any social media post. Do some digging before sharing.



Once you know a source is credible, it is great to share! However, when news is shared, it is open to skepticism from others, especially when related to personal beliefs and politics. When online, it can be easy to “hide behind the computer,” which tends to make people feel free to argue. Disagreements are not always bad, but when they include rude insults and hate speech it leaves little room for positive change. Be careful with your word choice when posting. Understand what you post can have consequences. Social media and online outlets are a great space to use to advocate when it is done respectfully.

Technology continues to change the way we connect with each other. Artificial intelligence (AI),

like ChatGPT, is changing how we work. But we need to think about the rules for AI. What data does it keep private? What data does it share? What rules need to be in place to make sure AI is used fairly and safely? AI can change the job market, schoolwork, and more, but we need to consider its risks.

AREAS OF INTEREST AND THINGS TO DO

Every self-determined 4-H project has various areas of interest. Each area offers specific things members can address during their project adventure. Using the 4-H 365 *Self-Determined Project Guide*, identify at least three areas of interest with at least three activities per area to explore. Take your ideas from the following list or make up your own.

Activities in this idea starter are designed for members to actively explore online. This might include reviewing social media posts, online news posts, relevant Youtube videos, artificial intelligence, and more. Your parents, adult guardians, or your project helper are encouraged to help you make a project plan that is comfortable for your family.

Protecting Your Digital Footprint

- Learn ways to protect your personal data online. Visit consumer.ftc.gov for some ideas. Explain to your club or group what you found and why everyone should be concerned about protecting their data.
- Review posts or comments on social media and decide whether or not something is appropriate to post. Write a brief summary what you learned.
- Create a plan to protect your data. Include updating passwords, what you will choose to share on social media, which privacy settings need to be changed, and so forth.
- Do a demonstration for your club or group about sharing online appropriately. Include which information is professional to share and which is unprofessional. Talk to a teacher or your project helper for guidance.

Media Balance

- For one day, keep a log of how much time you spend on a device—your phone, computer, television, or a video game. Make a plan to reduce screentime by replacing chunks of time with another activity, such as time outdoors, reading, or spending quality time with friends and family.
- Challenge your club or group to have a screen-free time. Lead activities for everyone to participate in together.
- Set boundaries for yourself. Set a timer and limit your screen time. If you have a phone, set “Do Not Disturb” times to limit distractions

while you are sleeping, doing schoolwork, and so forth.

- Research the pros and cons of screen time and electronic devices. Create and deliver a demonstration to your club or group about why it is important to limit screen time.

Informed News

- Visit icivics.org, type Newsfeed Defenders in the search bar, and play the game. Make a list of tips and tricks to find false reporting, deceptive news and ads, and scams. Share your findings with your club or group.
- Find a news story online. Search for coverage of the same story on a different site. Compare the differences in the way the story is told.
- Interview a local journalist. Ask, “How do you ensure the news you share is unbiased?” Share what you learn with your project helper.
- Corroboration is additional sources which confirm or support the claims of a news story, article, or piece of information. It is important to find corroboration for the stories you come across. Review how to use Lateral Reading by watching the video at youtube.com/watch?v=GoQG6Tin-1E. Then, watch at least one of the following videos and find corroboration from trustworthy sources (avoid ads, sponsored links, and opinion pieces) using the Lateral Reading technique. Finally, create a presentation and share your top three to five tips on Lateral Reading with your club or group.

- youtube.com/watch?v=4tjodLtjxkQ
- youtube.com/watch?v=uPzjERi2xfA

Digital Dialogue

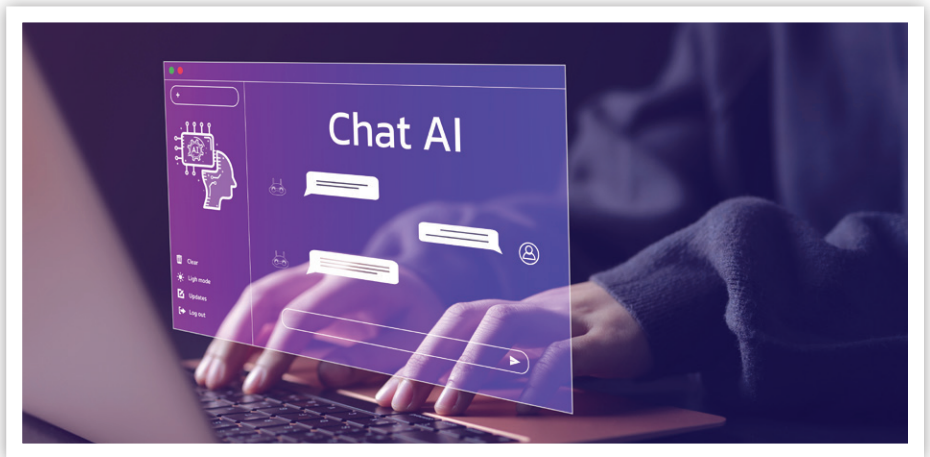
- Select a current and relevant topic related to an event or issue in your community. Create two examples—one positive example and one negative example—of social media posts related to your chosen topic. Include at least three comments in each example. Share the example posts with your project helper.
- Conduct online research on cyberbullying. Include information on how common it is, its impact on youth, and resources to help those affected. Present your findings to your club or group.
- Create a LinkedIn account (with a parent or adult guardian’s permission) at linkedin.com. Choose a professional profile picture and create a consistent, professional username and profile. Create a bio with fewer than 150 words highlighting your interests, skills, and aspirations. Share your profile with your club or group and talk among yourselves about the importance of being professional online. If you cannot make an account, create an example profile on a computer or poster.
- Watch or read the following videos and articles. Take notes on what causes online discourse to become uncivil and how uncivil discourse affects those involved. Present your findings to your project helper and discuss how people can have civil conversations

online and avoid becoming “internet trolls”.

- [kqed.org/education/529491/are-internet-trolls-born-or-made](https://www.kqed.org/education/529491/are-internet-trolls-born-or-made)
- [npr.org/2019/03/31/708039892/in-an-increasingly-polarized-america-is-it-possible-to-be-civil-on-social-media](https://www.npr.org/2019/03/31/708039892/in-an-increasingly-polarized-america-is-it-possible-to-be-civil-on-social-media) (PG14–Parental or Adult Guardian Permission Required)
- Use *Be Internet Awesome*, a special edition of Highlights magazine, to help educate others with fun, interactive activities. You could lead activities in your club, mentor a younger member, or share the resources with a teacher at school. Sponsored by Google, the 32-page color magazine and other activity pages are available for free download here: [internetawesome.highlights.com](https://www.internetawesome.highlights.com).

Technology

- Interview a teacher to ask, “What are your thoughts regarding the use of AI and Chat GPT in education?” Discuss the ethical implications of the technology related to schoolwork and intellectual property. Present your findings to your club or group.



- Research how AI works and its potential benefits and risks. For a place to start, visit [voicesofyouth.org/ai](https://www.voicesofyouth.org/ai). Make a list of AI’s benefits and potential risks. Share your list with your project helper.
- Do a reverse Google image search to find where a photo came from. Go to [Google.com](https://www.google.com) and click the camera icon to the right of the search bar. Upload a photo you own and see what Google image search finds, for example, the location of photo, similar photos, and so forth. Reflect on how this tool might be used in a career.
- Make a list of things that potentially use AI technology. Share them with your 4-H club and discuss ways to use these technologies safely.
- With parent or adult guardian permission, visit [chat.openai.com](https://www.chat.openai.com). Type in prompts to help you create your dream vacation, such as location, time of year, lodging, meals, activities, and so forth. See how specific you can make your itinerary. Share your

vacation plan with your project helper.

RESOURCES

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, [aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Social-Media-and-Teens-100.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Social-Media-and-Teens-100.aspx)

Common Sense Education, [commonsense.org/education](https://www.commonsense.org/education)

Experian Information Solutions, Inc., [experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/how-common-is-identity-theft](https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/how-common-is-identity-theft)

Federal Trade Commission, [consumer.ftc.gov/identity-theft-and-online-security/protecting-kids-online](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/identity-theft-and-online-security/protecting-kids-online)

Federal Trade Commission, [consumer.ftc.gov/articles/what-know-about-identity-theft](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/what-know-about-identity-theft)

iCivics, [icivics.org](https://www.icivics.org)

International Society for Technology in Education, [iste.org/explore/5-competencies-digital-citizenship](https://www.iste.org/explore/5-competencies-digital-citizenship)

[ohio4h.org/selfdetermined](https://www.ohio4h.org/selfdetermined)