

Internet and Digital Technology for Parents

Tip Sheet # 2 – Digital Footprint

Digital technologies present vast opportunities to educate young people about socialisation, self-expression and personal development. Young people are active users of these social media, they are not going away and therefore these opportunities must be exploited. However, use of these technologies also presents the potential for children and young people to be approached, groomed and/or bullied online.

The term 'Digital Footprint' is used to describe the 'trail' or 'presence' that people leave on the internet.

Anything posted to the internet can remain online forever (even after you delete it). Children and young people need to be mindful of the comments and/or images that they post online as these will determine their online presentation. As in the physical world, where verbal remarks or negative behaviour can determine a reputation, young people must make informed decisions pertaining to their online reputation.

We recommend that students present a positive online presence by considering:

- Who to trust
- What to reveal
- The opinions and thoughts they wish to articulate
- That interested people such as future employers may access their personal information
- The notion that once the information is posted online you lose control of who can copy it, what they use it for and who can see it.

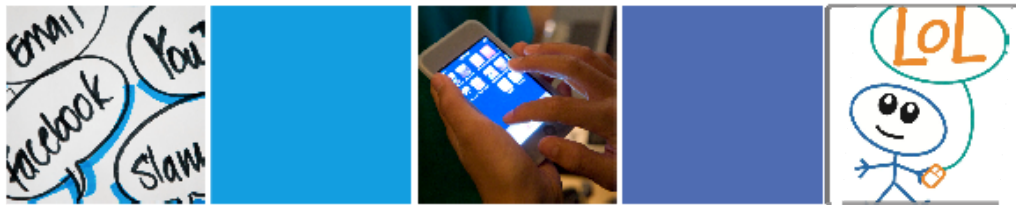
According to research young people love to publish information about themselves and their friends online. A young person's public Facebook page often includes large amounts of personal information such as their full name, address and/or suburb, relationship status, birth date, email address, mobile phone number and dates and locations of important events.

In order to minimise their digital footprint, it is suggested:

- Using an online name
- Using an avatar instead of photographs
- Password protecting spaces or accounts
- Protecting that password
- Being mindful that images or comments posted online are public and can be seen, changed or used by anyone
- Limiting personal details that are shared online
- Not allowing people that they don't know to join their chat or collaborative space.

Discuss with your child the information that they are making available on their social media page. Work alongside your child and agree to the information that they put online. Ask questions such as:

- What information are they disclosing about themselves?
- Is this too much information?
- What are the possible risks if this information was shared outside their friendship group?



Support links for parents

- **Cybersmart** (www.cybersmart.gov.au) provides activities; resources and practical advice to help parents safely enjoy the online world.
- **Childnet International** (<http://www.childnet-int.org>) provides resources on e-safety information for parents and carers.
- **NetSafe** (www.netsafe.org.nz) provides cybersafety education for all New Zealanders, but its information also holds relevance for Australian parents.