DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP: ESSENTIAL FACTS & TIPS FOR TEENS, PARENTS & TEACHERS*

Digital citizenship means … assuming responsibility for actions as well as content.

5 Essential Facts of Digital Life

1) **Kids are the creators.** It's all about participating; communicating; making music, images, and videos; and posting written content. And the content that's there? Kids must be able to know whether it's credible or not.

Everything happens in front of a **vast, invisible, and often anonymous audience.**

Once something is out there, it lasts for a long time. **Everything leaves a digital footprint.**

Information cannot be controlled. Anything can be copied, changed, and shared instantly.

Distance and anonymity separate actions and consequences. Kids think they can get away with unethical or unacceptable behavior because they don't see immediate consequences.

Digital Citizenship Tips for Teens

For teens, we offer five simple rules of digital citizenship to help them create a world they can be proud of -- and inspire others to do the same.

Think before you post or text -- a bad reputation could be just a click away. Before you press the "send" button, imagine the last person in the world that you'd want seeing what you post.

What goes around comes around. If you want your privacy respected, respect others' privacy. Posting an embarrassing photo or forwarding a friend's private text without asking can cause unintended hurt or damage to others.

Spread heart, not hurt. If you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online. Stand up for those who are bullied or harassed, and let them know that you're there for them.

Give and get credit. We're all proud of what we create. Illegal downloading, digital cheating, and cutting and pasting other people's stuff may be easy, but that doesn't make it right. You have the responsibility to respect other people's creative work -- and the right to have your own work respected.

Make this a world you want to live in. Spread the good stuff. Create, share, tag, comment, and contribute to the online world in positive ways.

Digital Citizenship Tips for Parents and Teachers

We live in a rapidly changing media and tech world in which kids are far more plugged in digitally than parents and teachers are, and these technologies present huge challenges for our kids and how they grow up. Digital dramas can have a lasting effect on a teen's life. But parents and educators can make a real impact on the future of teens growing up in a digital world. Help teens help themselves.

The Internet's not written in pencil. It's written in pen. What teens do online spreads fast and lasts long. Remind them to think before they post.

Nothing is as private as they think. Anything teens say or do can be copied, pasted, and sent to gazillions of people in a heartbeat. Make sure kids use privacy settings and that they understand that the best way to protect their secrets is not to post personal stuff.

Kindness counts. The anonymity of the digital world can lead kids to say and do things online that they wouldn't in person. Encourage them to communicate kindly, stand up for others, and build positive online relationships rooted in respect.

Digital cheating is still cheating. Right and wrong extend to online and mobile life. Impart your values, and tell kids not to plagiarize, download illegally, or use technology to cheat in school.

Embrace their world. None of us wants technology to isolate us from our kids. Do some homework, and ask kids to share the sites they visit, the songs they download, the gadgets they love. It's up to us to join the fun and help them seize the potential.

* Source: **Be a Good Digital Citizen: Tips for Teens and Parents,** In HYPERLINK "http://www.commonsensemedia.org/advice-for-parents/digital-citizenship" *Digital citizenship* by HYPERLINK "http://www.commonsensemedia.org/user/common-sense-media-editors" *Common Sense Me...*, **on 12.13.2010**