



Online Safety 101

Computers, smartphones, laptops, tablets, and more give students instant access to a **wealth of information and tools that allow them to learn, play, create, and connect with people from all over the world**. Along with these exciting and positive experiences, **the Internet can also expose them to new risks**. So before students start learning how to use the Internet as a research tool, it is important for them to be aware of some of these risks and to know how to protect themselves online. The next two lessons introduce students to **some basic guidelines that will help keep their online interactions safe and secure**.

Key Standards—Common Core ELA, Grade 7: RI.7, RI.7.1, RI.7.2, RI.7.3, RI.7.4, W.7, W.7.4, SL.7, SL.7.1, SL.7.1.a, SL.7.1.b, SL.7.1.c, SL.7.1.d, L.7, L.7.4, L.7.4.a, L.7.4.d, L.7.6. ISTE: 2b, 2d. CASEL: 4a, 4b, 4c, 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e, 5f.

Learning Objectives

Students will...

- ✓ Be able to identify unsafe online communication.
- ✓ Learn to use a tool that can help them assess online risk.
- ✓ Understand that it is their responsibility to protect themselves, and their friends and family, whenever they are online.



Introducing The Lesson

Before beginning this lesson, give students ample time to share their reflections from their homework assignment (their “Screen-Free Vacation”). Ask: *How difficult was this challenge? What did you miss most? What did you miss least? How did your parents fare with this challenge?* Get students to reflect on the kinds of things people rely on digital media for, such as: *searching for information, shopping, playing online games, texting friends, checking email, etc.* Next ask: *When you go online, who do you think is responsible for making sure the Internet is a safe and secure environment?* The answer you want to guide your students to is this: *Because there are no “police” patrolling the digital world, we are **all** responsible for keeping ourselves, and others, safe and secure online.*

The Lesson

1. Tell students that it’s important to be able to identify online interactions that may be **inappropriate, unsafe or even dangerous**. Just as they should be careful traveling offline, it is important that they stay safe when roaming online too. Explain that this lesson will equip them with some essential “rules of the road.”

The Lesson, continued

2. Remind students how easy it is for someone to hide their identity online. Any stranger, or even company, can pretend to be someone or something they're not in order to gain your trust. To keep safe from strangers online, smart digital citizens should follow these very basic "rules of the road" (have students record):

- **Never share personal information online.** This includes your name, address, telephone number, birthdate, social security number, name of school, parent information, passwords, etc.
- **Don't respond to text messages or emails unless you know who they are from.**
- **Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone you meet online.** If a stranger asks to meet you, tell a trusted adult immediately.

3. Explain that even with simple rules like these under our belts, it's still sometimes hard to make good decisions online. National Security Alliance's StaySafeOnline.org recommends using a **WWW Decision Tool**. It helps Internet users "remain in the driver's seat" by asking themselves three questions whenever they encounter uncomfortable situations online (have students record this too):

If something online makes you feel uncomfortable, ask yourself:

- **W – What information is being requested of me?**
- **W – Who is asking for personal information?**
- **W – Why do they need this personal information**

If you can't come up with a reasonable answer for each question above, beware!

4. Help students practice using this decision tool. Read the following story aloud:

When using his family's computer at home, Jake receives an email. The subject line reads: *You've Won!* Jake does not recognize the sender's email address but decides to open and read the email anyway. It says, "*Dear Lucky Winner, You have won a new iPad valued at \$600. In order to send you this prize we just need your address and phone number.*" Jake is excited to receive this gift, but feels uncomfortable. He decides to use the WWW tool to figure out what to do.

5. Have your class give Jake a hand by guiding them through a discussion asking:

- **What** information is being requested of Jake? (Answer: *Personal information he shouldn't share with a stranger, no matter how tempting the offer!*)

The Lesson, continued

- **Who** is asking him for this information? (Answer: *Jake does not know the person asking.*)
 - **Why** do they need this personal information? (Answer: *Supposedly to send a free gift, but since Jake doesn't know the sender, it is too risky to share personal information.*)
6. Explain that you are going to read some additional stories aloud to help students practice using the WWW Tool. Read the following stories, and use each one as an opportunity to have a discussion surrounding students' responses. Chances are many will have personal experiences related to each story, so be sure to discuss. (Alternatively, you could pass out and have students complete the attached worksheet independently.)

Goal

The goal of this lesson is to help students develop “rules of the road” for safe online interactions. By asking themselves three questions if and when uncomfortable or risky online situations occur, they will be able to make better decisions online.

*Elements of this lesson from National Security Alliance's [StaySafeOnline.org](https://www.staysafeonline.org).

PRACTICE USING THE WWW TOOL (in-class discussion)

**Directions: Ask students to tell you:
WHAT information is being requested?
WHO is asking for information?
WHY they need this information?**

...and then let your class determine if it is safe to proceed, or not.

STORY 1

Eric is 12 and loves playing online games. Recently when he was playing one of his favorite games another player who Eric had played with in the past but didn't know personally asks: *Where do you go to school? Where do you live?*

Ask your students the three questions above. Explain that Eric really has no idea who this person asking really is. He should never share his location with strangers online. Suggest to your students that if they play games or use social media networks that track and share their physical locations—a feature in Snapchat, for example—they should turn off or disable that feature.

STORY 2

Sam is in 7th grade, he is rather shy and wishes he could make more friends at school outside of his small circle of friends. So when a few of the kids from one of his classes send friend requests to his social media account, he jumps at the chance to friend them.

Ask your students the three questions above. Explain that social media can be a great way to get to know real life acquaintances better, such as other kids in our class, on our teams, or in our neighborhoods. It's okay to become online friends with kids you know in real life.

STORY 3

8th grade students Emily and Robin lived in the same neighborhood and had been good friends since third grade. Last year Robin's family moved hundreds of miles away. Now the girls keep in touch through texting and a social media site that both sets of parents have approved of them using. While on the social media site one afternoon, Emily receives a friend request from someone she doesn't know. But seeing that the unknown contact is an online friend of Robin's, she accepts the request. Soon this person begins asking Emily for personal information including her phone number.

Ask your students the three questions above. Explain that unless you personally know who this person is in real life, you shouldn't share your personal information with them, nor should you post personal information in a public venue. Also encourage students to choose their online friends wisely.

STORY 4

On one of her social media sites, 8th grade student Jemma gets a new follower – “Robert.” Robert likes and comments on Jemma’s posts, always saying something nice and flattering that makes Jemma feel good about herself. Although she does not know Robert in real life, she gets to know him slowly online over the course of many months and feels comfortable communicating with him. Over time they establish an online relationship. When Jemma discovers that he lives nearby and offers to meet her, she jumps at the chance.

Ask your students the three questions. *Explain that there is no way to be absolutely certain about the identity of an online stranger unless you know who that person is in real life. Anyone could be any age, or even gender, online (ask your students to recall the “Who Am I Online?” lesson from Level 1). Unless you are absolutely sure you know who this person is in real life, and have your parent’s permission, you should never meet a virtual stranger in the real world. If you feel the need to drive this story home with your students, share [this true story](#) about a Texas mom who catches a child predator.*

PRACTICE USING THE WWW TOOL (student worksheet)

STORY 1

Eric is 12 and loves playing online games. Recently when he was playing one of his favorite games another player who Eric had played with in the past but didn't know personally asks: *Where do you go to school? Where do you live?*

WHAT information is being requested? _____

WHO is asking for information? _____

WHY they need this information? _____

IS IT SAFE TO PROCEED, WHY OR WHY NOT? _____

STORY 2

Sam is in 7th grade, he is rather shy and wishes he could make more friends at school outside of his small circle of friends. So when a few of the kids from one of his classes send friend requests to his social media account, he jumps at the chance to friend them.

WHAT information is being requested? _____

WHO is asking for information? _____

WHY they need this information? _____

IS IT SAFE TO PROCEED, WHY OR WHY NOT? _____

STORY 3

7th grade students Emily and Robin lived in the same neighborhood and had been good friends since third grade. But last year Robin’s family moved hundreds of miles away. Now the girls keep in touch through texting and a social media site that both sets of parents have approved of them using. While on the social media site one afternoon, Emily receives a friend request from someone she doesn’t know. But seeing that the unknown contact is an online friend of Robin’s, she accepts the request. Soon this person begins asking Emily for personal information including her phone number.

WHAT information is being requested? _____

WHO is asking for information? _____

WHY they need this information? _____

IS IT SAFE TO PROCEED, WHY OR WHY NOT? _____

STORY 4

On one of her social media sites, 8th grade student Jemma gets a new follower — “Robert.” Robert likes and comments on Jemma’s posts, always saying something nice and flattering that makes Jemma feel good about herself. Although she does not know Robert in real life, she gets to know him slowly online over the course of many months and feels comfortable communicating with him. Over time they establish an online relationship. When Jemma discovers that he lives nearby and offers to meet her, she jumps at the chance.

WHAT information is being requested? _____

WHO is asking for information? _____

WHY they need this information? _____

IS IT SAFE TO PROCEED, WHY OR WHY NOT? _____

ONLINE SAFETY 101

- **Never share personal information online.** This includes your name, address, telephone number, birthdate, social security number, name of school, parent information, passwords, etc.
- **Don't respond to text messages or emails unless you know who they are from.**
- **Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with a stranger you meet online.** If someone asks to meet you, tell a trusted adult immediately.

If something online makes you feel uncomfortable, ask yourself:

W – What information is being requested of me?

W – Who is asking for personal information?

W – Why do they need this personal information

**If you can't come up with a reasonable answer for each question above,
beware!**